

33 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT **NIRVANA**



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p38

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PlayStation 2



BLENDER

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

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Three *Blender* staffers learn that being in the crunk overlord's posse isn't all awards shows and late-night tequila-tasting. Just mostly.

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"I DON'T EAT DOG FOOD. I EAT STEAKS." SNOOP DOGG

ON THE COVER

SNOOP DOGG

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
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FUR JACKET BY MOSCHINO FROM
BARNEYS NEW YORK
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RINGS AND CHAIN SNOOP'S OWN

THIS PAGE: T-SHIRT FROM THE GAP
NECKLACE BY N.G. JEWELRY

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"I'M NOT BABY SPICE ANYMORE." EMMA BUNTON

A full-body photograph of Tracy McGrady in a red Houston Rockets jersey with the number 1. He is in a dynamic pose, holding a basketball in his right hand above his head with his mouth wide open in a shout. He is wearing white sneakers and a white wristband on his left arm. The background is a dark, textured grey.

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"EVERYTHING IS TERRIFYING." CONOR OBERST

USEFUL
NEW
THINGY!

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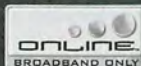
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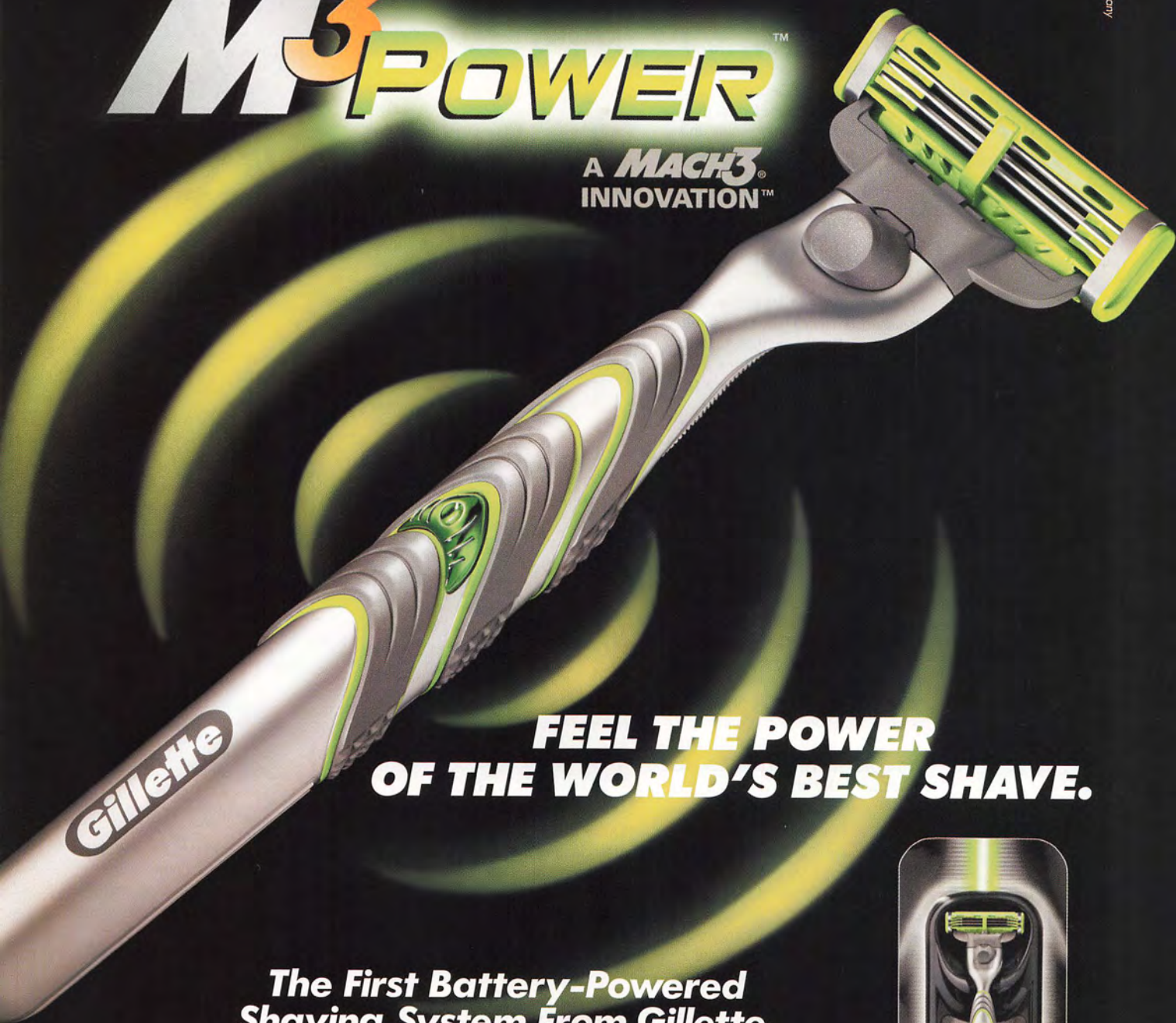
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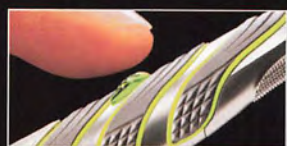
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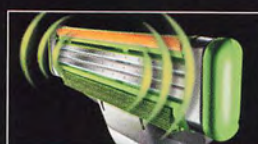
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R.I.P. JOHNNY

Thanks for putting the lyrics to my favorite Ramones song, "Cretin Hop," on the spine of the December issue. The great thing about *Blender* is that it knows when to be snide and sarcastic, but also when to show some heart, as was the case with your tribute to Johnny Ramone. He will truly be missed.

ERIN BULLOCK, SKANEATELES, NY

YOU'RE WELCOME

I was so surprised to read the upside-down lyric ("The things you lean on are the things that don't last") on the back page of the December issue and discover it to be from "Time Passages" by Al Stewart! Thanks for the advice and the flashback.

JULIE WOODDELL, COLUMBUS, OH

YOU'RE INSANE

So, I was inspired by Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale naming streets after each other ["The Coronation of Gwen Stefani," Dec. '04]. I spent an afternoon coming up with rock titles that could also be street names: "Highway to Hell," "Road to Nowhere," [letter-writer lists 39 other examples] and, finally, of course, the Streets.

SHIRLEY HENINGER, GLENDALE, CA

You do realize that's an afternoon you'll never get back, right?

SEND THIS MAN A GYRO!

Hey, you guys! Did you know that there is a mag here in Greece, *Music Life*, that is a *Blender* clone? Same columns, exactly the same design. I mean, God! So, now you can press charges against them and make millions of dollars! Do you have the best readers or what?!

MICHALIS SALMAS, ATHENS, GREECE

Queen Gwen's first decree was to invade Libya.



★ Congratulations to Julie Larson of Omaha, Nebraska, the winner of *Blender's* November Crossword contest, who walks away with a bitchin' Paradigm home-theater system.

LISTEN UP

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SAINT DUFF

After dealing with a blow from Hurricane Ivan, what comes in the mail? Hilary Duff on the cover of your mag ["The Golden Girl," Oct. '04]. Thank you, *Blender*, for making everything worth surviving for!

MIKE TREMPER, PENSACOLA, FL

NO COMMENT

Thanks for the article on U2 and their upcoming album ["Walk On Water," Nov. '04]. I have to say that I am surprised that you mentioned you were there when the demo was stolen since it implicates *Blender*. I've been watching my cop shows and *Blender* obviously had motive and opportunity. What I want to know is, why are you keeping it all to yourself? What selfish bastards. C'mon, spread the love.

SCOTT JOHNSON, DANVILLE, CA

SASSY

Re: Your "50 Greatest CDs of 2004" [Dec. '04]. Brian Wilson must be thrilled to know that, having finally completed his legendary *SMiLE* opus you ranked it a worse album than the latest releases from Courtney Love, Jimmy Eat World and Gretchen Wilson. I'm being sarcastic.

ALVIN HAFNER, VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

Yeah, we kind of got that.

NATURE VS. NURTURE?

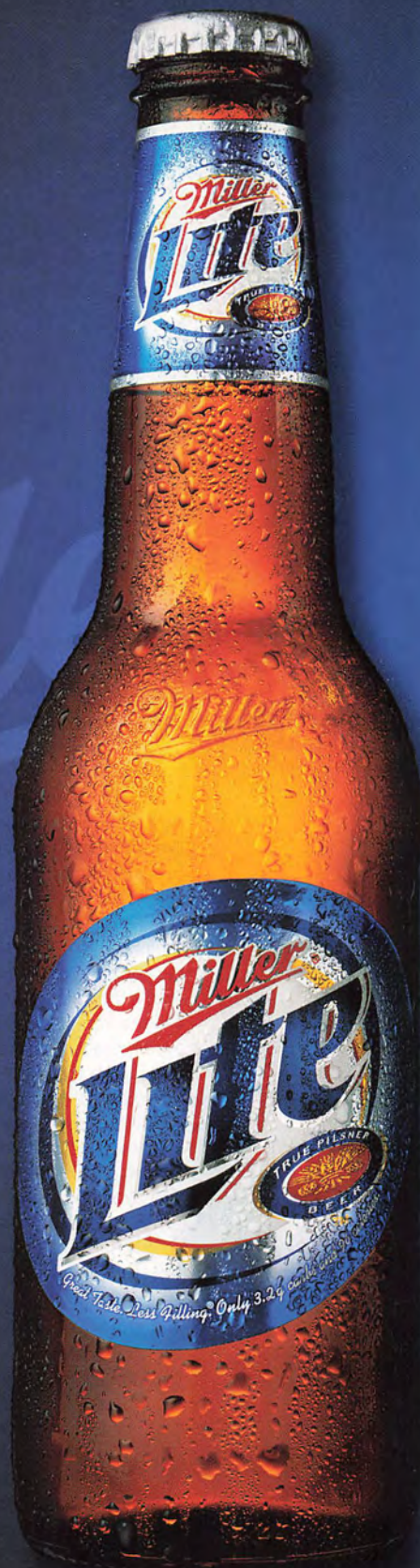
Last month, you quoted Jessica Simpson's little sister Ashlee as saying "I learned a lot from Jessica — what not to do" [Word!, Dec. '04]. Given that whole *Saturday Night Live* debacle, I can only assume that one of the things she learned not to do was sing.

MELANIE BUENCAUVINO, ADDISON, IL

Snap! Ba-zziing! And so forth . . . →

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Tommy Lee:
"Anyone
have rolling
papers?"

★ LETTERS

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Beyoncé and
Corey Stewart



Elisa and Erica Mancillas
and Hilary Duff



Conor Oberst and
Randi Bornstein



Iman Drummond
and Lil Jon



Daryl Hall, Steve Orchard
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★ Not only is the HP Photosmart R607 Digital Camera sleek and stylish, it fits in your pocket – all the better to stalk your favorite pop star! Send us your pics and if we print it, you'll get the prize!

A BALL-LICKING CAT?

I get really pissed when rock stars like Tommy Lee say that the best way to score with women is to "be yourself." That's fine if you're a rock star with a huge cock. But I find that "being myself" is less likely to have me hooking up with a *Baywatch* star than sitting alone in my local bar at 4 in the morning watching the owner's cat lick his balls. I earn minimum wage and – [a two-page-long diatribe about the inequities of life as a midwestern car mechanic follows]. So if Tommy thinks it's such a good idea "being me," maybe he can swap places with me and see how much he likes eating shit all day long while I look after his fucking koi.

MARTIN STEPHENS, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

GENIUS!

Re: Tommy Lee's *Tommyland* [Dear Superstar, Dec. '04]. As it contains conversations he's had with his penis, wouldn't *Two Dicks* be a better title?

MIKE RODEN, HARTSDALE, NY

We had 50 bucks on it being called *The Schlong*.

STOP PAYING ATTENTION!

Wow, *Blender*! First we see Paris on the beach at Malibu, then later in the photo section in the same suit? Did you go on vacation with her?

MANUEL PARTON, TUCSAN, AZ

If by "go on vacation with" you mean "stalk," yes.

CRACK IS WACK

Only two frigging stars for *Spider-Man 2*? Is your reviewer on crack?

RICK DAIGA, MANCHESTER CTR, VT

Only when he watches movies.

SHE KEEPS CALLING US

Can't you just leave Britney alone? OK, so she's done some stupid things. But weren't you young and stupid once?

AARON WERTH, CLINTON TWP, MI

Hey, who you calling old and stupid?

EXPOSED!

Is someone paying you to run a story about Courtney Love every single freaking month?

SCOTT HECKER, FRANKLIN PARK, NJ

No. But we do get air miles. →



Paris:
"Get off my
beach!"

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MECHASSAULT 2
Lone Wolf



it's good to play together

XBOX LIVE



Rick James:
"And these I
use to clean
out my nose."

SCALEY!

Blender's "If Pop Stars Were Dogs" feature is one of my favorite parts of your magazine. But what about other pets? I have a terrapin who looks a bit like Neil Young if you squint. Would it be possible one month to have "If Pop Stars Were Amphibians"?

GARY REAKE, SAN DIEGO

If pop stars were amphibians? That would just be stupid.

THANKS, BITCH

I just want to say: That was one great Rick James piece, bitch! ["Requiem for a Super Freak," Dec. '04]

JEN PAGAN, GARWOOD, NJ

HIGH LIFE

Reading your piece about the always-colorful Rick James I couldn't help wondering: Where are today's Rick Jameses?

JIM SCMITZ, PLYMOUTH, MI

Face down in a pile of coke, we imagine.

SHOOTING STAR

I am writing regarding a small news item you printed that began, "Shyne has shot back at prison authorities" [News Roundup, Dec. '04]. Given the reasons why Shyne was put in jail in the first place, don't you think you could have phrased that a little better?

RON LASNICK, BROOKLYN

BOOB JOB

Do you stay up all night thinking of new reasons to run that picture of Janet Jackson flashing her boob at the Super Bowl? ["The 'What the F*%@' Awards," Dec. '04]

ALISHA SCHIEFFER, FARGO, ND

No, normally we've thought of one by lunchtime.

AMEN

Re: Sum 41's "How to Fake Your Own Death" [Useful Tips From the Stars, Dec. '04]. I wish they would. Anything to make them stop with their smug pop-punk crapola.

FRANK DICICCO, VENTURA, CA

★ LETTERS



Extreme Elvis
has that
dream again.

WHICH PHOTO?

Next time you print a picture of a naked fat Elvis impersonator dancing with a dwarf standing uncomfortably close to his genitals [Weird Band Alert, Dec. '04], could you please put a warning on the cover? Or at least write a note to my boss that explains why I've gone temporarily blind?

OTTO MEIN, CHICAGO

Dear Otto's boss . . .

STROKES BACKLASH

Regarding your news item about the Strokes possibly spending five years making their next album [News Roundup, Dec. '04]. In that amount of time, the Beatles recorded five albums, including *Sgt. Pepper's*. And, as much as I like them, if the next CD from Albert Hammond, Jr., and friends is as good as any of them, I will be extremely surprised.

PAUL VALDES, WENTAVILLE, MO

TAKE OFF, CÉLINE, EH?

Does anyone else find it slightly tragic that Cat Stevens was refused entry to the country while fellow foreigner Céline Dion is here all the fucking time? ["Buh-Bye," Dec. '04]

TED CORTAZZI, STEPHENS POINT, NJ

IT'S DA BOMB

I was glad to see *Blender* tackling some of the tougher issues within the world of international music with your "Yikes!" article (December 2004). I think it's disgusting that the mastermind behind t.A.T.u. is cashing in on the world's political problems with his new project n.A.T.o. I'm sorry, but pop stars masquerading as suicide bombers is simply not a way to sell records.

JON CURTISH, MALIBU, CA



WIN
ME!

IF POP STARS WERE DOGS. . .

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Send us a photo with your name and address and who your dog happily resembles. If we print your photo, you'll win the ZVOX 315 sound console, a speaker-amplifier system that'll complete your home stereo system.



RUSTY
THE DOG



CLAY AIKEN
THE POP STAR

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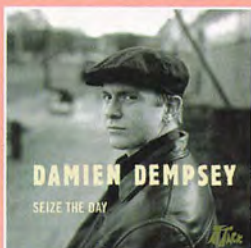
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Nancy Sinatra



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pop albums of 2004”
- *The New York Times*

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from the original glam
rock hero!

New York Dolls



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BLENDER

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**DIARY
OF A
SUPERDIVA**

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THE MOST
AWESOMELY
MEDIocre
ARTISTS OF
ALL TIME!

ON SALE TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Dear Ketel One Drinker

Can you find the subliminal message in this advertisement?

BURNER

★ KRAVITZ TOILETGATE ★ AVRIL'S HOOTERS ★ ODB R.I.P.

ONE OF THE year's most anticipated musical collaborations came to an abrupt and controversial end when a tearful R. Kelly was kicked off his joint tour with Jay-Z, a day after being allegedly pepper-sprayed by a member of the rapper's entourage.

About an hour into the October 29 concert at New York's Madison Square Garden, the midway point on the pair's 40-city *Best of Both Worlds* tour, Kelly announced from the stage that he'd seen two audience members waving guns and that he feared for his safety. "I can't do no show like that," he said, obviously distressed. "This shit is over."

Security halted the show for several minutes while they checked the arena for weapons. When none were found, Jay-Z took the stage to chants of "Hova! Hova!" and told the crowd, "Fuck that — I got this shit myself."

Kelly claimed that when he tried to return and perform, he was pepper-sprayed by someone in Jay-Z's posse. Police later arrested Tyran "Ty Ty" Smith, 32, a longtime friend of Jay-Z's and a former executive at his now-defunct Carter Faculty label, and charged him with third-degree assault.

A source present backstage told *Blender* that Kelly was "crying like a bitch." He was treated at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York and released that night. "I was nervous as hell," he explained later.

The next day, the tour's promoter



SUPER

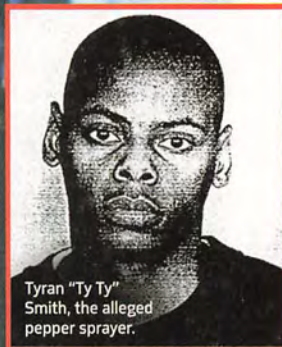
The Jay-Z/R. Kelly tour suffers a meltdown amid imagined guns and some real pepper spray



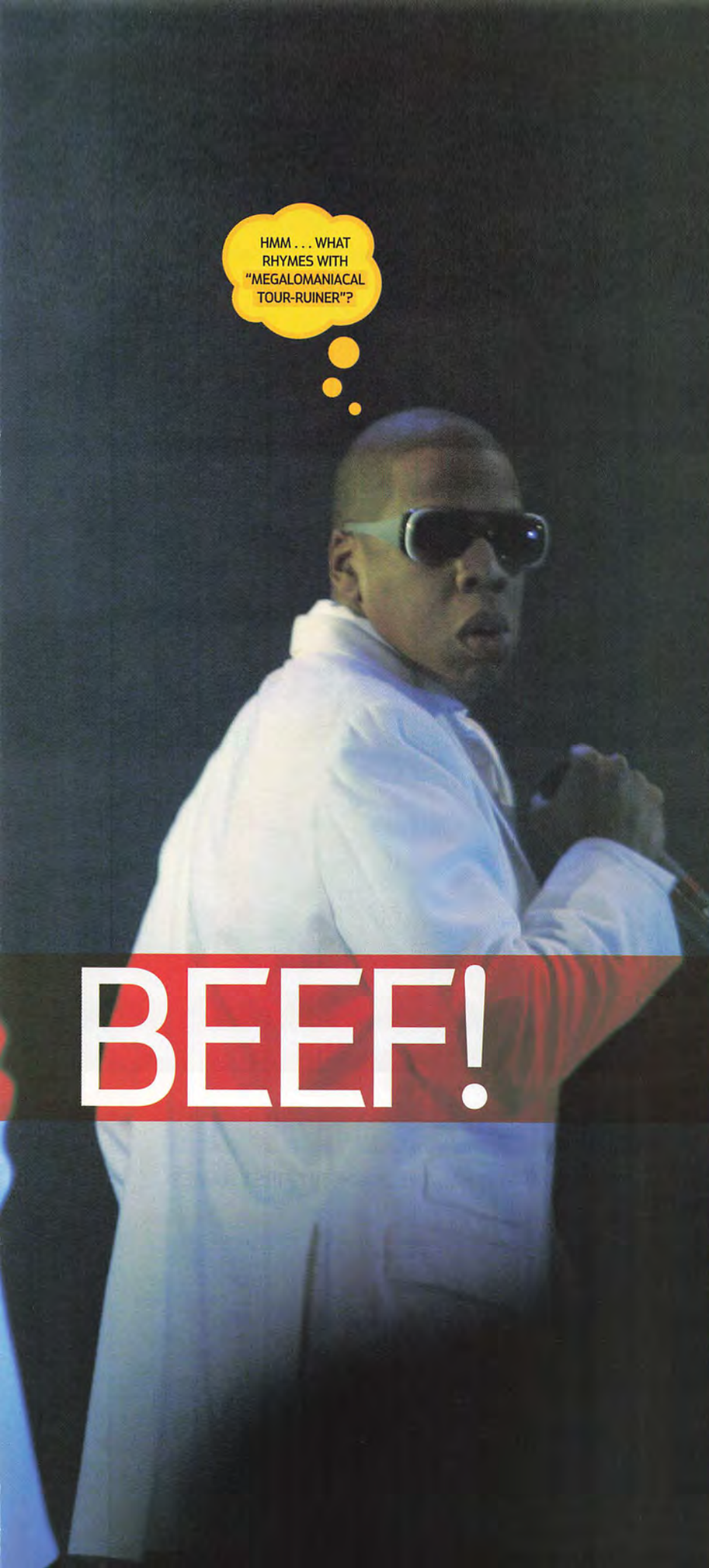
R. Kelly leaving a New York hospital after getting sprayed.



A happy scene backstage at Madison Square Garden, October 29.



Tyran "Ty Ty" Smith, the alleged pepper sprayer.



HMM... WHAT
RHYMES WITH
"MEGALOMANIACAL
TOUR-RUINER"?

BEEF!

announced that Kelly had been given the boot. Jay-Z headlined the rest of the tour solo, and P. Diddy, Mariah Carey, Snoop Dogg and Usher filled in for R. Kelly at the three remaining New York shows.

Two days later, Kelly filed a \$75 million lawsuit alleging that Jay-Z had violated his contract and accusing the rapper of sabotage. "We're asking for \$15 million in real damages — money lost from the concerts and record sales — and \$60 million in punitive damages," Kelly's attorney, Edward

R. KELLY WAS "CRYING LIKE A BITCH" BACKSTAGE.

Hayes, told *Blender*. "I call it 'punitive-damages bling.'" Jay-Z shot back with a statement blaming Kelly's "lack of professionalism and unpredictable behavior" for the tour's collapse.

Rumors of a feud between the two superstars had dogged the tour since its opening night in Chicago, when Jay-Z's performance was said to have "destroyed" Kelly in his hometown. "I put a hole in Chicago," Jay-Z said.

Other problems included squabbling over the division of profits, two cancelled dates and a bizarre performance in St. Louis where Kelly argued with the lighting technician before storming off the stage and heading to a local McDonald's, where he worked the drive-through window for three hours. "He was aggravated," said Allan Mayer, Kelly's spokesperson. "He finds [going to McDonald's and passing out burgers] relaxing."

This wasn't the first time a partnership between the duo derailed. They were set to tour in 2002, but plans were scrapped after Kelly's arrest on charges of child pornography.

"[The tour] looks great on paper," Jay-Z told a New York radio station after the Garden show. "But certain things just ain't meant to happen."

Two weeks after getting booted, Kelly found himself in the middle of yet another scandal when a videotape surfaced allegedly showing him having sex with two women, one of whom is said to be DeLeon Richards, the wife of New York Yankee Gary Sheffield. The outfielder acknowledged his wife had had a "long-term relationship with a well-known singer over 10 years ago." JOSH EELLS



Alanis:
"Yeah, that's
right. I'm
bad."

DO YOU ROCK?

ALANIS MORISSETTE

Can the Canadian "Ironie" singer pass our litmus test?

Ever trash a hotel room?

No, but I've trashed many backstage areas with food fights. One time, there was peanut butter and salsa everywhere!

Best rumor about yourself?

In Mexico, there were bootleg T-shirts of me shooting up, so everyone thought I was a drug addict.

Ever wrecked a car?

I flipped a car once, three times over. I still drove it home, though.

Ever get lucky on an airplane?

Many times.

Biggest celebrity's home you've ever gotten drunk in?

I'm usually too self-conscious to get drunk in anyone's home. But I threw a big party last summer, and Ellen DeGeneres and k.d. lang came.

Hobby?

I'm really into essential oils. I also collect tarot cards.

Biggest celeb in your cell phone?

My fiancé [actor] Ryan Reynolds.

Ever had a brush with a law?

I went through customs with my dog and I was given a hard time so I yelled at them a little bit.

Worst tour horror story?

One time, I chased our keyboard player around the stage with a birthday cake — he tried to get away but ran into a bunch of equipment and really hurt himself. DAVE HILL



VERDICT

MEXICANS THINK SHE'S
A JUNKIE?
ALANIS... ROCKS!

→ ALANIS MORISSETTE'S SO-CALLED CHAOS (MAVERICK) IS OUT NOW.

NEWS ROUNDUP

At a Hispanic heritage celebration in his native Harlem, J. LO's husband MARC ANTHONY paid tribute to a policeman who steered him away from a life on the streets by urging him to attend school. Officer Kevin Lowry responded modestly, saying, "I was just doing a policeman's job."

Queens of the Stone Age leader JOSH HOMME was spotted laughing with former bandmate NICK OLIVERI following a gig by Homme's side project, Eagles of Death Metal, at the Silver Lake club Spaceland. Homme fired the bassist in February for his "annoying behavior."

ELVIS PRESLEY has topped the list of highest earning dead rock stars with an annual income of \$40 million.

WORD!



"Right now I'm interviewing for a butler. I'm looking for a white man."

P. DIDDY

¡Hola!

Paulina Rubio bares cheeks, doesn't blame wardrobe.

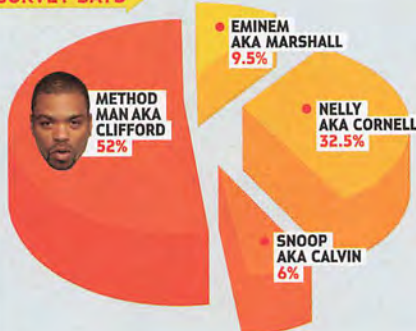
LATIN SUPERSTAR AND *Blender* September 2002 cover star Paulina Rubio hosted this year's MTV Latin Music Video Awards in Miami in a completely backless dress. "That dress was definitely the biggest fashion statement I have ever made," Rubio told *Blender*. "It was so liberating!"



BLENDER'S BURNING QUESTION

WHICH RAPPER HAS THE DORKIEST FIRST NAME?

SURVEY SAYS



READER WISDOM

"CLIFFORD ISN'T A NAME FOR A PERSON, IT'S THE NAME OF A BIG-ASS RED DOG!"

TACARA, ST. PAUL, MN

Log on to *Blender.com* for March's "Burning Question."

One deserving reader will have his or her comment published in the next issue and win an Atari Flashback Videogame Console!

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Might & Magic



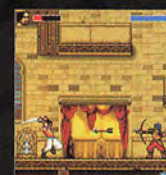
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THE NEXT BIG THING

M.I.A.

Poverty! Violence! Jude Law! This Sri Lankan rapper has seen it all.

BY JONAH WEINER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS

ALL ABOUT ME!

REAL NAME

Maya Arulpragasam

OBESSIONS

Really serious documentaries. It's a bit nerdy, but I like information!

WON'T TOUR WITHOUT

My old Bahamas T-shirt.

FAVORITE CD RIGHT NOW

Diplo's *Favela On Blast* — it's a mix of Brazilian stuff.

SHE'S NO GANGSTA, but Maya Arulpragasam could teach American MCs a thing or two about the hard-knock life. "I know what it's like to live in a little village under attack by machines that are dropping bombs at 29 shells per second," says the Sri Lankan rapper who calls herself M.I.A. Between sips of orange juice at a sun-soaked Manhattan street café, she adds, "I know what it feels like to be shot at, when all you have is a loaf of bread to survive on."

Born in 1976, M.I.A. was 7 when civil war between the Sinhalese and an ethnic minority called the Tamils broke out. M.I.A., a Tamil, fled to London with her mother, sister and brother in 1986.

In London, M.I.A. instantly gravitated toward music. "It was the only thing I had. At school, I did a dance performance to Run-DMC's 'Mary Mary,'" she says. The perfor-

mance turned her from outcast into class hero: "Suddenly, it wasn't about whether I could speak English or if I was a refugee."

M.I.A. eventually enrolled at a prestigious art school, which led to a flurry of creativity. In 2001, a year after she graduated, she returned to Sri Lanka to shoot documentary footage — a way of coming to terms with her childhood trauma. She also painted (Jude Law was among her patrons) and, in 2002, began making music. The result is her debut, *Arular*, led by the thundering, nonsensical club hit "Galang."

While some tracks reflect M.I.A.'s experiences of violence and alienation, most aim to get asses shaking. "I'm just sick of people staring at their shoes and wanting to slit their wrists," she says with a laugh. [BLENDER]

>> OUT NOW ARULAR XL

"I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE SHOT AT."

DRESS BY LUXURY JONES
(AT SOME ODD RUBIES, NYC);
VINTAGE EARRINGS,
STYLIST'S OWN; GOLD
PENDANTS AND
SNEAKERS, M.I.A.'S OWN



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ASHLEE SIMPSON'S WORST WEEK EVER!

Blender presents a day-by-day guide to the Ashleegate fallout: from hoedown to acid reflux to dad's damage control.

OCTOBER

SATURDAY

23

6:00 P.M.

While rehearsing at NBC studios for her **SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE** appearance, Ashlee runs offstage crying, holding her throat.



SUNDAY

24

12:45 A.M.

Ashlee takes the stage to sing "Autobiography." A prerecorded vocal from "Pieces of Me" starts. While her band plays along, Ashlee dances a jig. Thirty-five seconds later, she abandons her band and walks off.

12:55 A.M.

Back from commercial, Ashlee says, "I feel so bad. My band started playing the wrong song and I didn't know what to do, so I thought I'd do a hoedown. I'm sorry!"

TO BLAME: **HER BAND**

1:23 P.M.

Ashlee "Ho Down!" shirts available on Internet.

7:38 P.M.

Geffen Records issues a statement, blaming a computer glitch.

TO BLAME: **COMPUTER**

11:00 P.M.

In response to hostile remarks by fans on her website's message boards, Ashlee posts: "There's too many important people behind my career to stop it now."

TO BLAME: **HATERS**

MONDAY

25

12:37 P.M.

Dad/manager Joe Simpson tells **RYAN SEACREST** on an L.A. radio show: "She has acid reflux. It makes her hoarse and her vocal chords swell."

TO BLAME: **ACID REFLUX**

2:00 P.M.

On N.Y.'s Z100, **JOE SIMPSON** says **SNL** failed to respond quickly enough to the situation.

TO BLAME: **SNL PRODUCERS**

8:00 P.M.

Village Voice columnist Michael Musto says: "We know she can't dance, because of that jig. And we know she can't act, because we've seen her on TV. What can she do?"

TO BLAME: **LACK OF TALENT**

9:00 P.M.

Ashlee lampoons her **SNL** gaffe at the Radio Music Awards in Las Vegas. Backstage she tells **CARSON DALY**, "Things happen. I'm a human being. I had severe acid reflux."

TO BLAME: **HUMANNESS & SEVERE ACID REFLUX**

TUESDAY

26



7:00 A.M.

On *The Today Show*, Ashlee says: "My dad was the one who was like, 'Honey, you have to [use a backing track].'"

TO BLAME: **FATHER**

9:15 A.M.

Ashlee's drummer, Chris Fox, posts on her website: "Plain and simple, I cued the wrong song."

TO BLAME: **DRUMMER**

WEDNESDAY

27

7:00 A.M.

US Weekly hits the stands and in it, Ashlee's mom, Tina, says, "Her voice just went on Saturday. She has been diagnosed with laryngitis."

TO BLAME: **LARYNGITIS**

10:30 P.M.

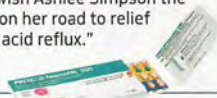
MANDY MOORE tells an Australian radio show: "Everybody sings live on **SNL** because it's such a prestigious thing to do. [Ashlee] is so sweet, so your heart just sinks."

THURSDAY

28

9:52 A.M.

A spokesperson for Tap, maker of acid reflux medication **PREVACID**, issues a statement: "We wish Ashlee Simpson the best on her road to relief from acid reflux."



"THERE'S TOO MANY IMPORTANT PEOPLE BEHIND MY CAREER TO STOP IT NOW."

FRIDAY

29

3:00 P.M.

CBS releases footage of **SNL** producer Marci Klein watching Ashlee walk offstage. "I've never had someone walk off a set in the middle of a live television show," she later said.



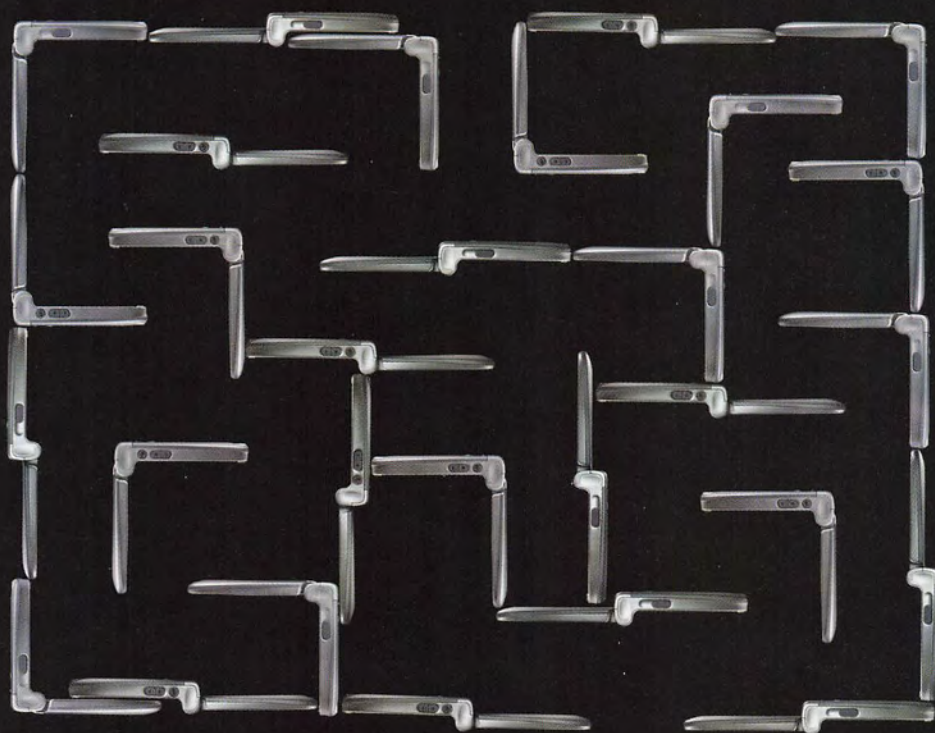
5:00 P.M.

AVRIL LAVIGNE tells *Billboard*: "I know for a fact there are some young female artists who don't sing live, and that is pathetic. I've never lip-synced once."

TO BLAME: **YOUNG FEMALE LIP-SYNCERS** SUZANNE ELY



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*The phone shown is available exclusively at Cingular



DOOD!

Lenny Kravitz clogs his toilet and his neighbors sue for damages



It is alleged that, on August 1, the toilet in Lenny Kravitz's apartment became "clogged and congested with various materials."



As a result, "catastrophic damage" was caused to a neighboring apartment.



Kravitz is now being sued for \$333,849.77 by the insurance company that had to pay for the repairs.

NEWS ROUNDUP

BONO has claimed there is only one serious challenger to **U2**'s position as the best band in the world. "Franz Ferdinand make me a bit nervous," he admitted.

Soul legend **RONALD ISLEY** has been indicted on five counts of tax evasion and one count of failing to file a return. Among the charges, the IRS alleges the 63-year-old singer has been using royalty checks due to his dead brother, O'Kelly.

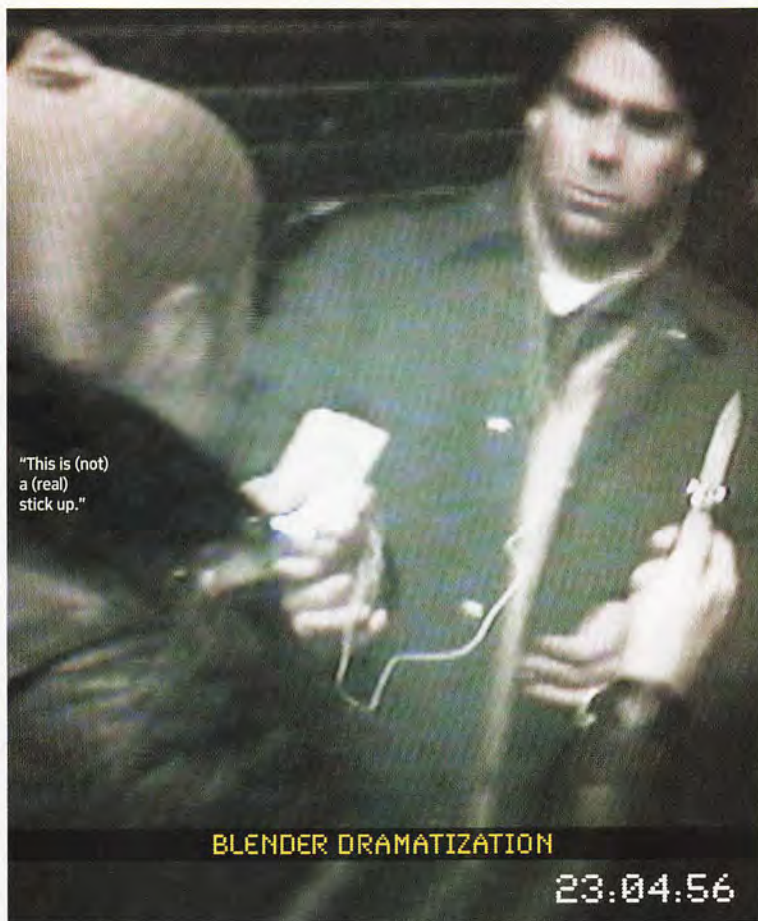
JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE admitted that his purchase of hundreds of dollars' worth of lingerie, which included garters and panties, was for girlfriend **CAMERON DIAZ**. "You bet!" he told an inquiring salesgirl.

WORD!



"My prerogative right now is to just chill."

BRITNEY SPEARS



Mugged!

iPod users are easy targets of thieves on the streets

★ **LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS** are warning users to keep their iPods under wraps.

With easily identifiable white ear buds and cords, the portable music players have become a hot commodity for street thieves nationwide.

One victim, Patrick Berry, 25, of Philadelphia, had his player picked out of his back pocket while he walked home from work. "It was really fast," he recalls. "I had to buy a new iPod last week. I bought black headphones, and now I keep the player in my bag, all zipped up."

It boils down to the conspicuousness of the iPod, a spokesman for the New York City Police Department says. "Those white cords go from the listener's ears into wherever they are keeping the

machine. It's a job that can be done in less than a minute."

Although the NYPD doesn't have exact statistics on the number of iPod thefts, neighborhood patrol cops are being told to encourage people to wear less conspicuous headphones and to be more careful, since the often loud music renders

users less aware of their surroundings.

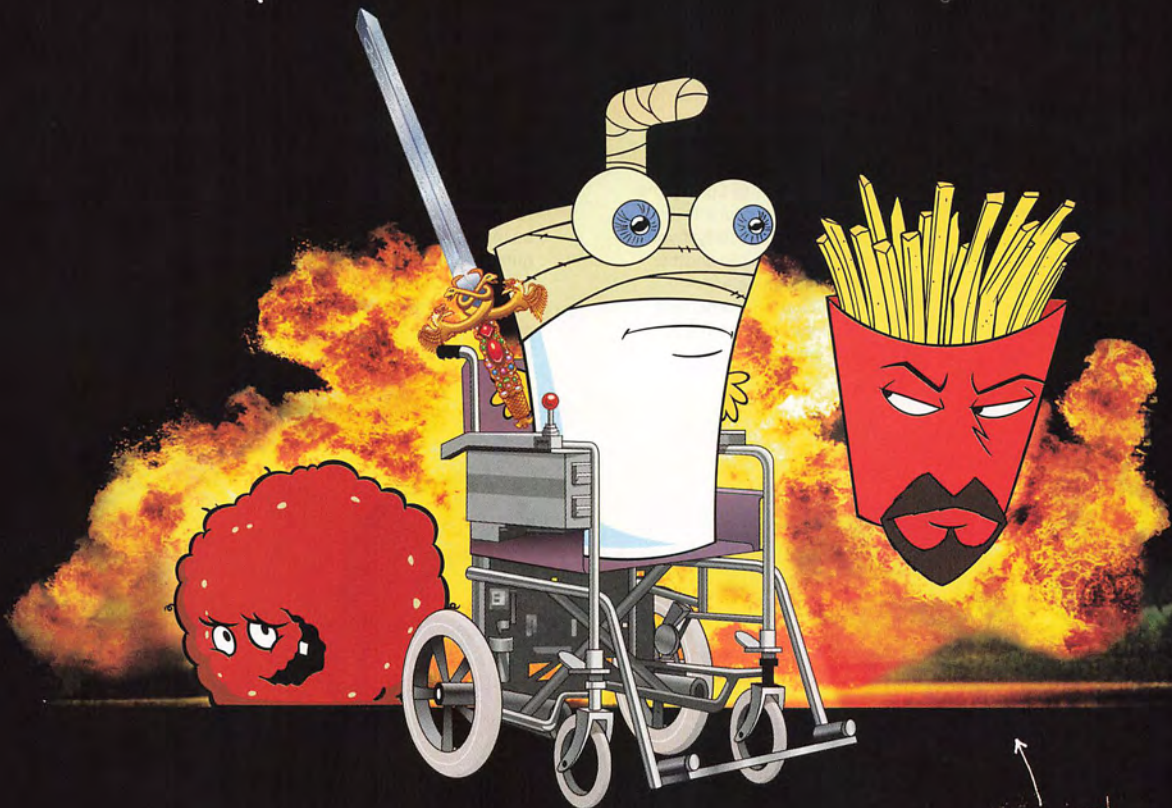
An officer with the force compared the thefts to the rash of Air Jordan muggings in the early 90s.

"Kids were getting knifed on their way to school for those babies. Same thing. When you have a commodity that is so obvious, so coveted and out of most people's price range, it's going to be a problem," the police officer told *Blender*. **JOHANNA PIAZZA**



COPS ADVISE IPOD USERS TO WEAR LESS OBVIOUS EAR BUDS

This is the Aqua Teen Hunger Force



Why aren't you watching this?

MIDNITE Sunday through WEDNESDAY

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USEFUL TIPS FROM THE STARS

HOW TO...

(Not) Name Your Band

Who knows more about ill-advised band names than Texas pop-punk goofballs **Bowling for Soup**? No one!

BY STEVE KANDELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

1 DON'T LEAVE IT TO FATE!

JARET REDDICK, SINGER: "Do not just put a bunch of random words in a hat and draw them out thinking you're clever — because you may end up having to call your band something like 'Bowling for Soup' for the rest of your life, and you don't want that!"

2 AVOID THE F-WORD!

ERIK CHANDLER, BASSIST: "Unless you are George Clinton or Bootsy Collins, the use of the word *funk* is prohibited. Especially if you want to turn it into another word, like *funkified* or *funkalicious*, or something ridiculous like that. It's not 1977 anymore."

3 DON'T DRINK AND NAME!

CHRIS BURNEY, GUITARIST: "Avoid naming your band while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. You might be more likely to add a number or the word *stereo*. And don't name it after a car — that's for strippers — or open a medical dictionary for inspiration. Sorry, Anthrax."

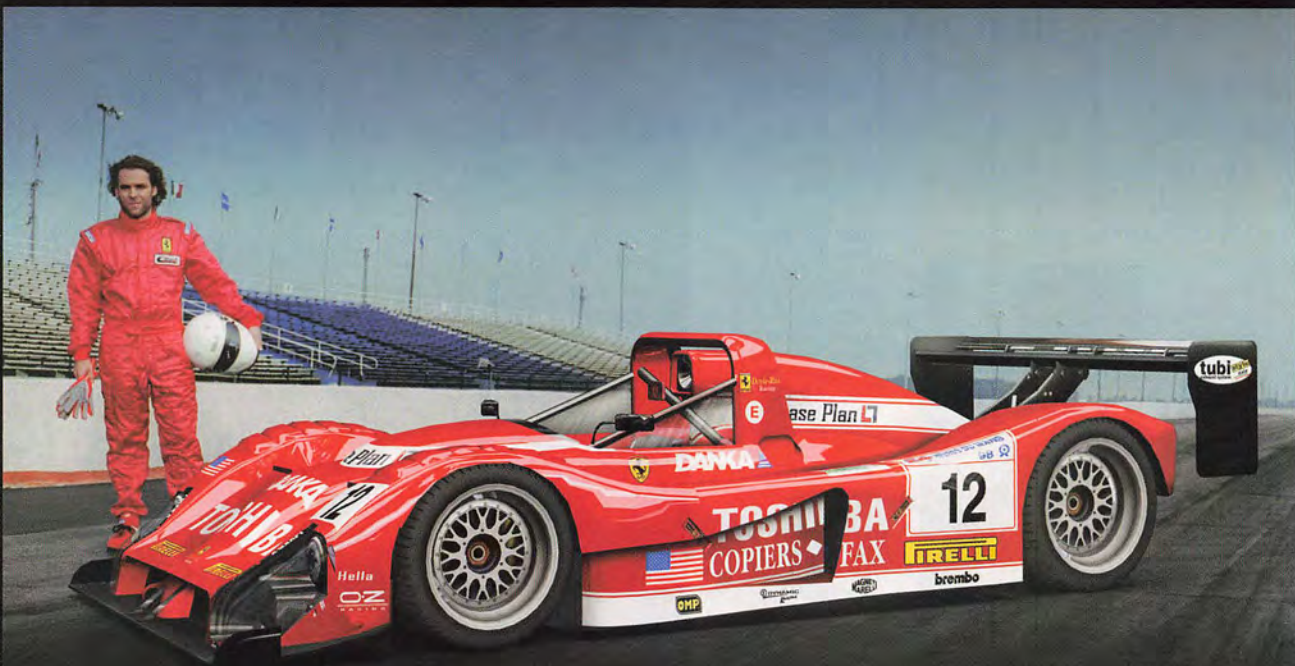
4 LEAVE THE LADIES OUT!

GARY WISEMAN, DRUMMER: "The worst way you could name a band is sitting over coffee with your mom. She's just not going to have any rockin' ideas. Also, don't include the name of your current girlfriend since she's inevitably going to dump you and run off with your best friend."



Bowling for Soup, from left: Jaret Reddick, Erik Chandler, Chris Burney, and Gary Wiseman

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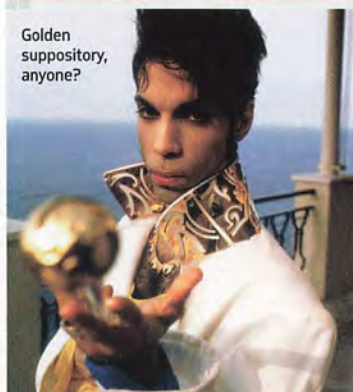
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XBOX LIVE

WHEN WILL YOUR FAVORITE POP STAR CROAK?



Golden suppository, anyone?

#15 PRINCE

CURRENT AGE 46

AVERAGE AMERICAN'S LIFE EXPECTANCY 77

CATEGORY YEARS ADDED/SUBTRACTED

African-American male -6

Endured parent's divorce at age 7 -6

Self-imposed social isolation, loner since high school -2

Prolific composer, performer, multi-instrument musician (mental gymnastics maintains vitality) +4

In a (second) married relationship +5

Aspires to simultaneously be his own composer, performer, agent, marketer and salesman (control issues) -2

Diva boss who boomerangs stress onto subordinates, band members, business partners (anger issues) -2

Very public whooping by Tipper Gore in "evil lyrics" campaign (stress of media overexposure and losing to a housewife) -2

Movie theme created for *Batman* strikes out big-time with movie producer -1

Chronic chameleon: Prince—Skipper—Prince—TAFKAP—Prince (compulsive need to redefine self) -4

Age phobic: "I won't age gracefully"—2

Boardroom squabbles are lengthy, legendary and lifelong (so far) -3

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY 56

PROJECTED YEAR OF DEATH

2014

GERONTOLOGIST DR. DEMKO SAYS: "He should adopt stress and conflict management to cope with tumultuous relationships and self-reflection to identify and embrace his true self."

NEWS ROUNDUP

JAY-Z is launching a cognac to rival associate Damon Dash's Armadale vodka range. "Jay knows Damon takes his vodka really seriously," said an insider. "This is war."

ELTON JOHN has said that his marijuana habit in the '80s—following the breakdown of his disastrous marriage to **RENATE BLAUER**—forced him to undergo corrective surgery to save his voice.

BRITNEY SPEARS was allegedly left fuming after being passed over to play **JUDE LAW**'s girlfriend in the comedy *I ♥ Huckabees*. Actress **NAOMI WATTS** eventually won the roll.

WORD!



"I'd like to be governor one day."
COURTNEY LOVE



Boo!

Avril trades goth for hot in a saucy Hooters getup

AVRIL LAVIGNE SPOOKED fans by donning a Hooters waitress costume for a Halloween gig in Philadelphia. "We ate lunch at Hooters the day before, and I asked for a uniform," Lavigne told *Blender*. "During the show, I ran backstage, put it on, came out dancing to [Outkast's] 'Hey Ya!' and did vodka shots with the band. It was a really fun night!"

WEIRD BAND ALERT!

THE MISFATS

A Misfits cover band with a weight problem

So, a fat-themed Misfits tribute act?

Yes. This Portland four-piece, which incorporates candy-filled piñatas and a giant fake ham sandwich into their show, may have adopted the skeletal makeup of Glenn Danzig's legendary punk-metal band, but they're far from skeletal in frame. Food-centric changes in lyrics drive the point home: "20 eyes," for instance, becomes "20 pies."

How fat are they?

Guitarist Bill Niese (alias: Foil Von Franksnbeans), 36, an "underemployed

The Misfits: "Hi Mom!"



techie," weighs 260 lbs. "I am not the fattest guy in the band," he says.

Is the fat lifestyle compatible with the punk lifestyle?

Punks might often be skinny, but there's no law against packing on the pounds. "Both lifestyles stress not giving a rat's ass about what anybody else thinks of you," Niese explains. STEVE LOWE



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"JUST CHILL"

Retired dancer Kevin Federline cultivates the life of leisure as Mr. Britney Spears.



Kevin drops off his white convertible Mercedes at the local car wash, October 17.



After making a cash withdrawal at the bank, Kevin hits an L.A. golf course, October 30.



At a Malibu newsstand, a handgun magazine catches Kevin's eye, November 2.

NEWS ROUNDUP

ROD STEWART, 59, has said his sex life now revolves around quality rather than quantity. "As the years go by, we don't get it up as often as we used to," he joked.

JOSS STONE is tussling with her parents over the age at which she should inherit her singing millions. She has haggled the age down from 23 to 21, but is now trying for 18. "I'm poorer than my friend Emily who works at Burger King," she moaned.

Genealogist Troy Dunn from MyFamily.com says he can prove that **MADONNA** and **CÉLINE DION** are distant cousins. "Céline's people were horrified," he said.

WORD!



"Her chest is ahead of her by 2 or 3 feet—it gets there before she does."

JOE SIMPSON ON HIS DAUGHTER JESSICA

Shower caps are rad!

IN THE STUDIO

"Totally Awkward!"

That's how **Tommy Lee** describes being in a room again with the **Crüe**

★ **MÖTLEY CRÜE** — LEGENDARY rockers, notorious bad boys, consorts of porn stars — are holed up at a studio on Hollywood's famed Sunset Boulevard to record new songs for their upcoming greatest hits collection. They must be drinking and drugging and raising all kinds of hell . . . right?

"Man," says **Vince Neil**, "we're not even hanging out together."

Truth is, singer **Neil**, 43, and drummer **Tommy Lee**, 42, have barely spoken since a fistfight marred the end of their last tour six years ago. "To sit down and collaborate was pretty much out of the question," **Neil** says.

Instead, they're working tag-team style, with bassist **Nikki Sixx** overseeing the sessions while **Neil** and **Lee** do their best to avoid each other. (Guitarist **Mick Mars**, 48, has been sidelined by hip replacement surgery.) The closest they've come to a reunion was a brief sit-down with

their manager before the project began. "It was totally awkward," says **Lee**. "We haven't been in a room together since . . . God, '98?"

Still, **Sixx**, 46, likes what he's heard. "We just did a really cool version of the Stones' 'Street Fighting Man,'" he says.

Lee is less enthusiastic. "This whole thing's kind of wack. I'm not sure any of [the songs] are that great.

To be honest, I don't even know why we're doing this interview."

Statements like these — along with **Lee's** admis-

sion that "one thing I don't miss about **Mötley Crüe** is seeing **Vince's** bloated, disrespectful

ass every day" — don't bode well for the two-year world tour kicking off in February. But **Sixx** isn't worried.

"Listen," he says, "we're fucking adults. No one's gonna cry over spilled milk."

Just in case, though, **Neil** has a backup plan. "Everybody," he says, "gets their own bus." **JOSH EELLS**

ALL ABOUT OUR ALBUM

ARTIST
Mötley Crüe

STUDIO
Cello Studios, Hollywood

PRODUCED BY
Bob Rock

LAST RECORD
New Tattoo (2000)

NEW RECORD
Red, White and Crüe: American Debauchery (February)



ALSO IN THE STUDIO

◀ **LIL' KIM** is working with **Timbaland** and **Kanye West** at NYC's Sony Recording Studios on her follow-up to 2003's *La Bella Mafia*.

ROONEY are in L.A.'s Sunset Sound studios with **Tony Hoffer** recording their follow-up, due in the spring, to their self-titled 2003 debut.

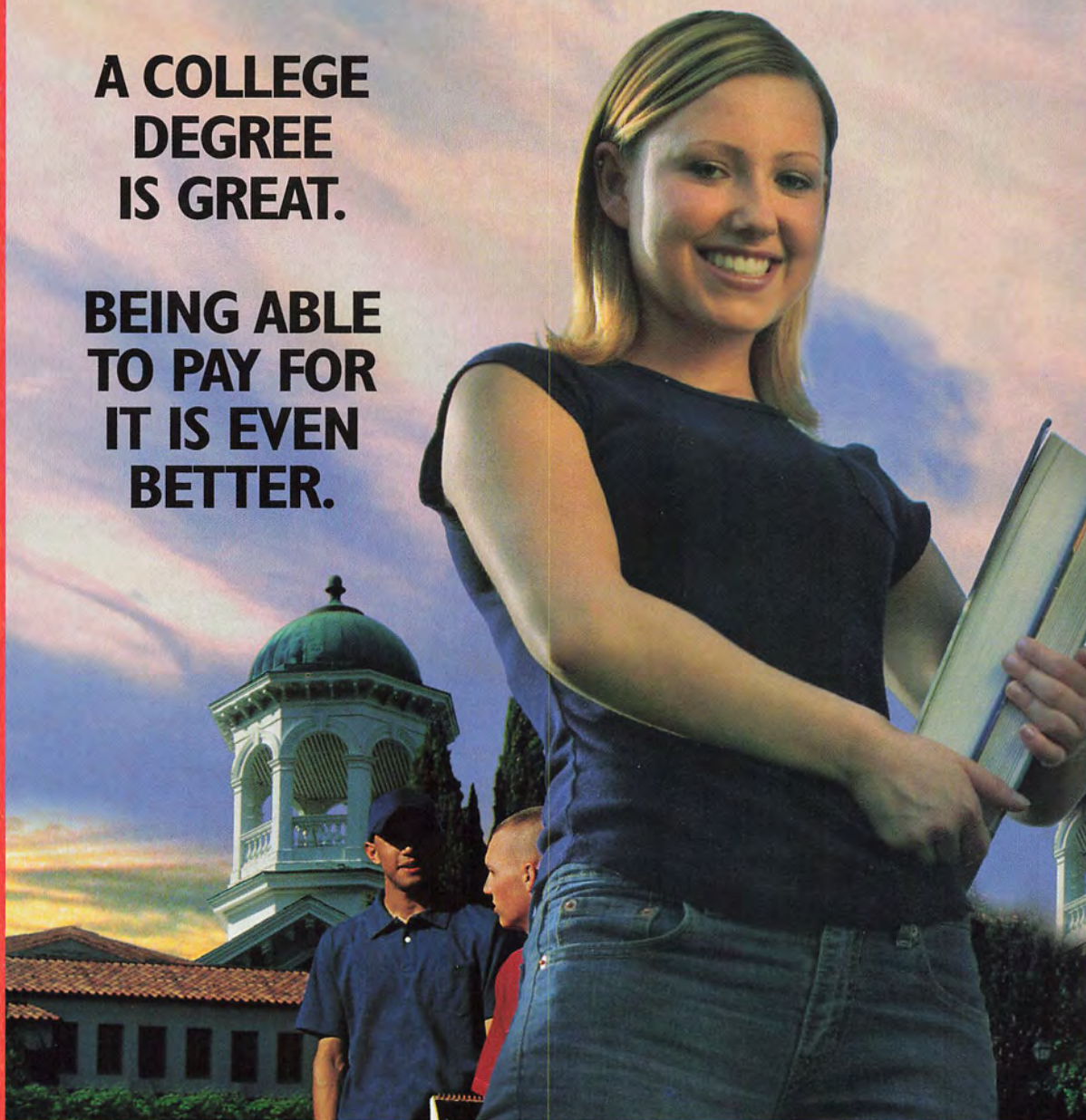
AL GREEN is finishing the follow-up to 2003's *I Can't Stop*, at Royal Studios in Memphis with producer **Willie Mitchell**, due March.

JASON MRAZ is working at his San Diego home studio on the follow-up to 2002's *Waiting for My Rocket to Come*.



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THE NEXT BIG THING

Buck 65

A Canuck rapper, and former Kiss Army member, who croaks like Tom Waits

BY WILLIAM VAN METER

BUCK 65 HAD AN unusual, not to say traumatic, introduction to music. "My cousin was into Black Sabbath," the 32-year-old Canadian hip-hopper recalls between spoonfuls of pea soup at a Manhattan diner. "And he'd lock me into a dark room, play it really loud and not let me out."

Although the young Buck subsequently became a metalhead — and a Kiss Army member — it was the discovery of pioneering hip-hop label Sugarhill that changed his life forever. In quick succession he became a rap radio jock, a producer and, ultimately, an MC in his own right. Seven albums later, Buck is not only a cult figure in Canada, but also the foremost exponent of what he calls "dirt road break beat blues, like if Steve Earle made hip-hop."

The man born Richard Terfry is now set to entrance and/or bewilder American ears thanks to V2, which is releasing *This Right Here Is Buck 65*, a compilation of new tracks (and re-recordings of old ones) that highlight the rapper's gravelly Tom Waits-esque voice and his off-kilter lyrical sensibilities. Rather than rap about bling, Buck focuses on truck drivers and backwoods inhabitants — like the young woman in "Cries a Girl" who is ridiculed because everyone thinks she is inbred.

"I have this weakness, this great empathy, and maybe this isn't right, but pity for the forgotten outcasts and lonely people," he explains.

It's all a long way from such early Buck tracks as "Centaur," which, in slightly more traditional hip-hop style, found the rapper "metaphorically" boasting about penis size (sample lyric: "I have plenty to say/But nobody listens/Because my cock is so big/And the end of it glistens").

In fact, these days Buck 65 says he doesn't even call himself a rapper, because, he deadpans, "certain people would punch me in the face." [BLENDER]

>> OUT NOW THIS RIGHT HERE IS BUCK 65 V2

ALL ABOUT ME!

OBSESSIONS

Baseball, France, John Fahey, vanilla milkshakes, Sasquatch

WON'T TOUR WITHOUT

Febreze and baby wipes

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY WHILE LISTENING

Choppin' wood

BEST THING ABOUT CANADA

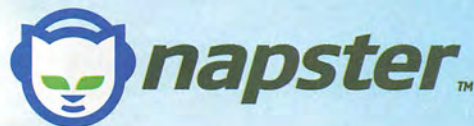
Not being involved in Iraq

"I HAVE THIS WEAKNESS FOR LONELY PEOPLE."

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ASHLEE SIMPSON



XZIBIT



MANDY MOORE



KEVIN FEDERLINE

NEWS ROUNDUP

LIL' KIM has said that **P. DIDDY** tried to stop her from getting breast implants, even asking the singer's family to dissuade her. "After I got everything done, he was like, 'Damn, you look good,'" she claimed.

ERIC CLAPTON had his driver's license suspended in France after being pulled over for doing 134 mph in his Porsche 911 Turbo near Dijon.

Troubled ex-Libertines frontman **PETE DOHERTY** has been banned from London's tony Groucho club for wrecking a sculpture worth \$180,000 while he was playing a gig with his other band, Babyshambles.

WORD!



"I'm a very, uh, artsy person."
PARIS HILTON



Gwen Stefani and hubby Gavin Rossdale leaving for London after the news broke.



Mama Pearl Lowe



Daughter Daisy

Love Baby!

Gwen Stefani's husband, Gavin Rossdale, has a surprise daughter. Oops!

★ THE MARRIAGE OF Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale is allegedly "strained" following news that the Bush frontman is the biological father of 15-year-old English model Daisy Lowe.

Daisy's mother is Pearl Lowe, a London scenester whose circle includes Kate Moss and Jude Law's ex-wife, Sadie Frost, and who had a brief romantic relationship in the late '80s with Rossdale.

A businessman Pearl Lowe had met in Egypt was originally named the father, but there has been speculation over Daisy's rock-star blood

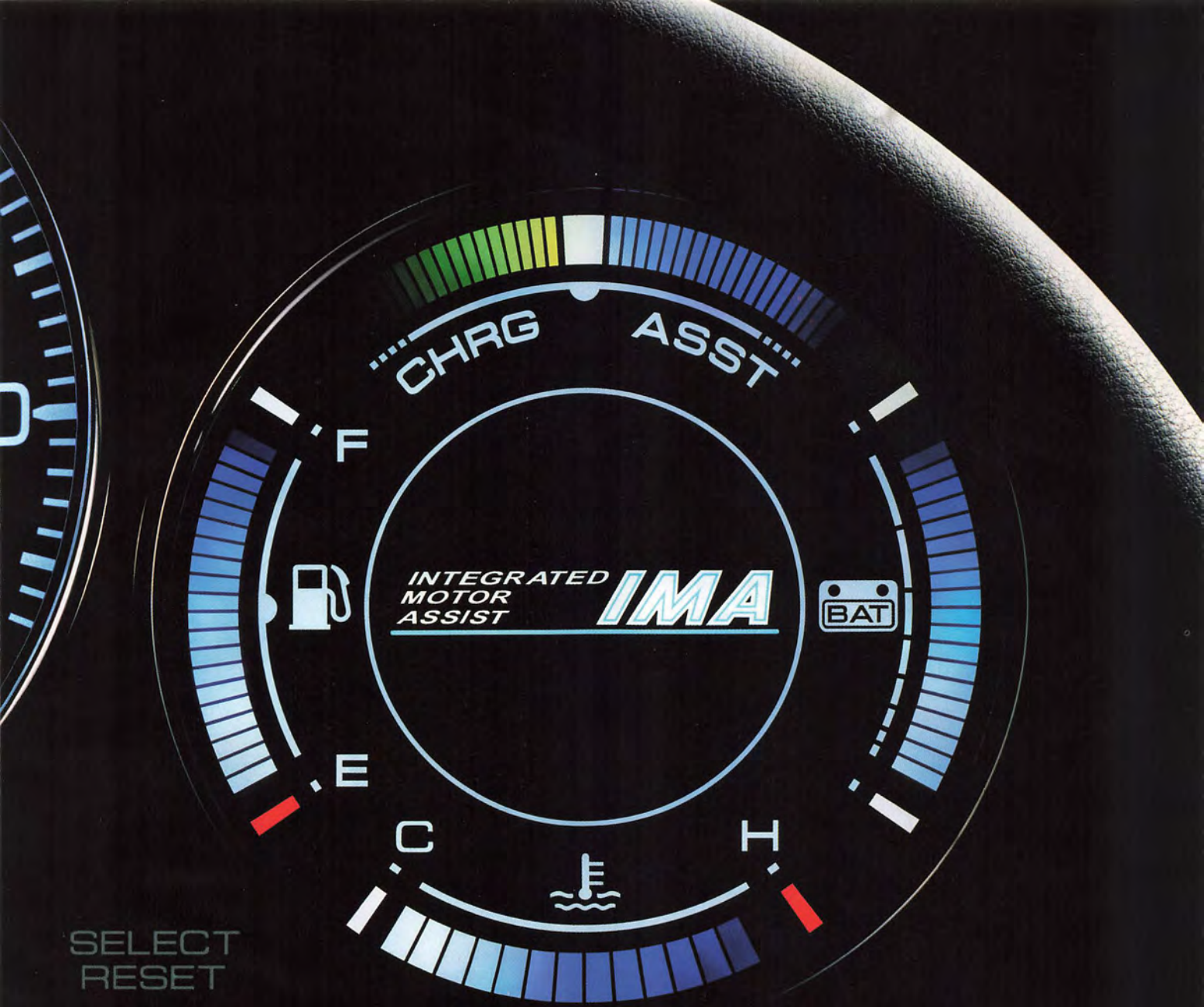
since the mid-'90s, when Pearl Lowe achieved fleeting notoriety as the singer in Britpop also-rans Powder. "People would point at Daisy and say, that's Gavin's daughter — it was just kind of assumed," a source claimed.

Although Rossdale is Daisy's godfather and has remained close with the teenager, he never believed he was her father. On

Pearl Lowe's insistence, Rossdale reluctantly agreed to DNA tests and was "freaked out" by the results.

"They were good friends but it has all become slightly awkward now," said another insider. STEVE LOWE

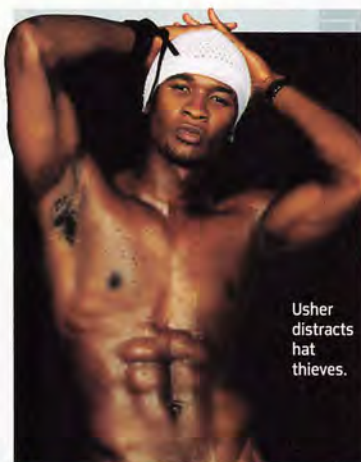
"IT'S ALL BECOME SLIGHTLY AWKWARD."



SELECT
RESET



A fuel gauge? Or a gauge of intelligence?
47 city. 48 highway.* The Civic Hybrid.  **HONDA**



Usher
distracts
hat
thieves.

YEAH!

Usher, potential sex-tape victim



HAS USHER JOINED the ranks of Paris Hilton and Tommy Lee by appearing in his very own amateur sex video?

A 20-minute tape, allegedly featuring the *Confessions* singer having sex with two women, is being shopped around to media outlets by an anonymous seller who is asking for upwards of \$25,000.

The tape peddler claims that Usher Raymond was 19 years old when the sexy romp was filmed.

A portion of the video viewed by *Blender* shows a man — who strongly resembles a young Usher — dirty dancing with a naked woman as TLC's "Waterfalls" is playing in the background. (TLC's Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas would later become Usher's girlfriend.)

Grabbing her backside, the woman moans, "Ush." The tryst appears to take place in a hotel room.

The singer, who just turned 26, declined to comment about the video. JOHANNA PIAZZA

NEWS ROUNDUP

The latest singer slated to appear on *The Simpsons* is **CHRISTINA AGUILERA**, playing a rival to Lisa in an *American Idol*-style talent show.

DESTINY'S CHILD have helped the cause of women in the Far East. On the band's tour in Japan, a fan told Beyoncé Knowles that "Independent Women" helped boost young women's pride in their careers. "That's culture we changed," said Knowles, "in our own little way."

Weighing in for the recurring "Ruben's Weight Loss Challenge" segment on television's *Extra*, *American Idol*-winner **RUBEN STUDDARD** tipped the scales at 455 lbs. For his new get-slim regime, the portly singer will have to cut his daily calories from 4,000 to 1,500.

LIFE AFTER ROCK



The Left Banke:
Ironically on the
right bank.



Tom Finn

THE LEFT BANKE

THEN
BASS, VOCALS,
1965-1968

NOW
PARTY DJ,
NEW YORK

★ "OUR FIRST SINGLE, 'Walk Away Renee,' went to number 5! It's in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as one of the top 500 songs of the modern-rock era, yet it took 40 years for me to realize it was about letting go."

"In the mid-'60s, life in Greenwich Village was magic. It was sex, drugs and rock & roll. I was jamming with Jimi Hendrix before he was famous."

"After the band broke up, I worked for jazz drummer Buddy Rich as the soundman at his nightclub, doing the sound for Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzie Gillespie. By the time I was 23, I had one hell of a musical education."

"In 1982, I was DJ-ing at Heartbreak, and Steve Rubell came in and convinced me to do sets at Studio 54 and the Palladium. I hit a home run! I was pumping Madonna, oldies, Motown, soul from the '60s and '70s, and modern New Wave and punk rock. No other DJ had my

musical vocabulary. Rubell eventually introduced me to his friends and I played their parties."

"I grew up motherless and penniless. I am one of those people who just had to make it. So I went after the people with money. I've DJ'd Whitney Houston's wedding, President Clinton's millennium New

Year's Eve party and Oprah's 50th birthday party. I've done royal weddings where the queen of England was in the house. I've

got the society set, the JPMorgan crowd, the heirs, and I've got billionaires with a beat as my clients now. They know that I can turn on a dime and take them anywhere they want to go musically."

"When I come into town, I'm a fucking killer. I'm there to draw blood. I'm there to make asses shake. I don't fuck around. I blend songs together better than just about anybody. I'm the real deal." AS TOLD TO JON REGARDIE

"WHEN I COME
TO TOWN, I
DRAW BLOOD."

WHAT'S IN FRED'S HEAD?



"When things that are living are in fact dying, they change colors, but the things that are already dead will always remain the same."

A RANDOM THOUGHT TAKEN FROM FRED DURST'S BLOG

WORD!



"I am a
fly bitch!"

KIMORA LEE
SIMMONS

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Blood
Violence



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OBITS

JOHN PEEL, 65, Oct. 25, in Cuzco, Peru, of a heart attack. England's pop-music taste-maker. By far the most influential DJ of the post-Beatles rock era, championing new underground music on the air for 40 years, most of that time spent at BBC Radio 1 since its inception in 1967. Peel helped break many British rock giants, like Led Zeppelin, David Bowie and the Clash, as well as American acts ranging from Frank Zappa to the White Stripes. *Peel Sessions*—recorded in-studio performances by visiting bands—often became successful commercial releases.

BRUCE PALMER, 58, Oct. 1, in Bellville, Ontario, of a heart attack. Bassist alongside Neil Young and Stephen Stills in Buffalo Springfield. Palmer also teamed with Young and future star Rick James in the ill-fated Mynah Birds.

GREG SHAW, 55, Oct. 19, in L.A., of heart failure. Rock journo-turned-label boss. Founded Bomp Records 30 years ago to release a Flamin' Groovies single. Appeared in this year's Brian Jonestown Massacre/Dandy Warhols documentary *Dig!*

O.D.B. at the Church of Holy Trinity in Manhattan, 2003.



Ol' Dirty Bastard

1968–2004

Beloved Wu-Tang Clan member died in Manhattan at age 35

★ **OL' DIRTY BASTARD**, the most flamboyant and troubled member of the Wu-Tang Clan, collapsed suddenly inside a West 34th Street, Manhattan, recording studio on Saturday, November 13, 2004, after complaining of chest pains. His 15-year-old son, Barson, who was at the studio, described his father as "shaky and mad paranoid" before paramedics arrived and pronounced him dead. He was 35 years old.

O.D.B., known for his raucous lyrics on hits like "Shimmy Shimmy Ya" and for his even more raucous lifestyle, seemed to be on the road to a comeback after years of imprisonment for a litany of charges, ranging from drug use and shoplifting to making terrorist threats. He had recently taped *Stuck on O.D.B.* (a reality TV series in which a contestant was electronically leashed to the rapper via an ankle bracelet), contributed to the Wu-Tang live album *Disciples of the 36 Chambers: Chapter 1* and been signed to Roc-A-Fella records.

"Russell inspired all of us with his spirit, wit and tremendous heart," Roc-A-Fella CEO Damon Dash said in a statement. "The world has lost a great talent, but we mourn the loss of our friend."

A posthumous solo record will be released early in 2005, but the rapper's estate will likely be a matter of considerable legal contention. Born Russell Tyrone Jones, the Brooklyn native was a man of many aliases: Ason Unique, Osiris, Dirt McGirt, Dirt Dog and Big Baby Jesus. He had three children by widow Icelene and at least four other offspring by various women. At his wake and funeral, two separate memorial programs gave conflicting accounts of the number

of his progeny.

"It's not easy for me," O.D.B. told *Blender* in 2001, while serving two to four years in the Clinton Correctional

Facility in Dannemora, New York, for possession of crack and probation violation. "I feel like I'm in a spaceship that has just landed here. When you get out, you realize there's nothin' there at all."

His funeral, held in the Christian Cultural Center in Canarsie, Brooklyn, on November 18, brought out an estimated 3,000 mourners, including stars like Mariah Carey, with whom O.D.B. dueted on her 1995 hit "Fantasy," dropping the unforgettable line, "Me and Mariah go back like babies and pacifiers."

In an open casket, O.D.B. lay in a clean white suit. He was eulogized by a Christian preacher, a Nation of Islam minister and his cousin RZA, who like O.D.B., belongs to the Nation of Gods and Earths (also known as the Five Percent Nation).

RZA explained that as a boy, Russell had chosen the Five Percent name Ason Unique, which means "a son who is unique." From the church podium, RZA apologized for rechristening his cousin "Ol' Dirty Bastard."

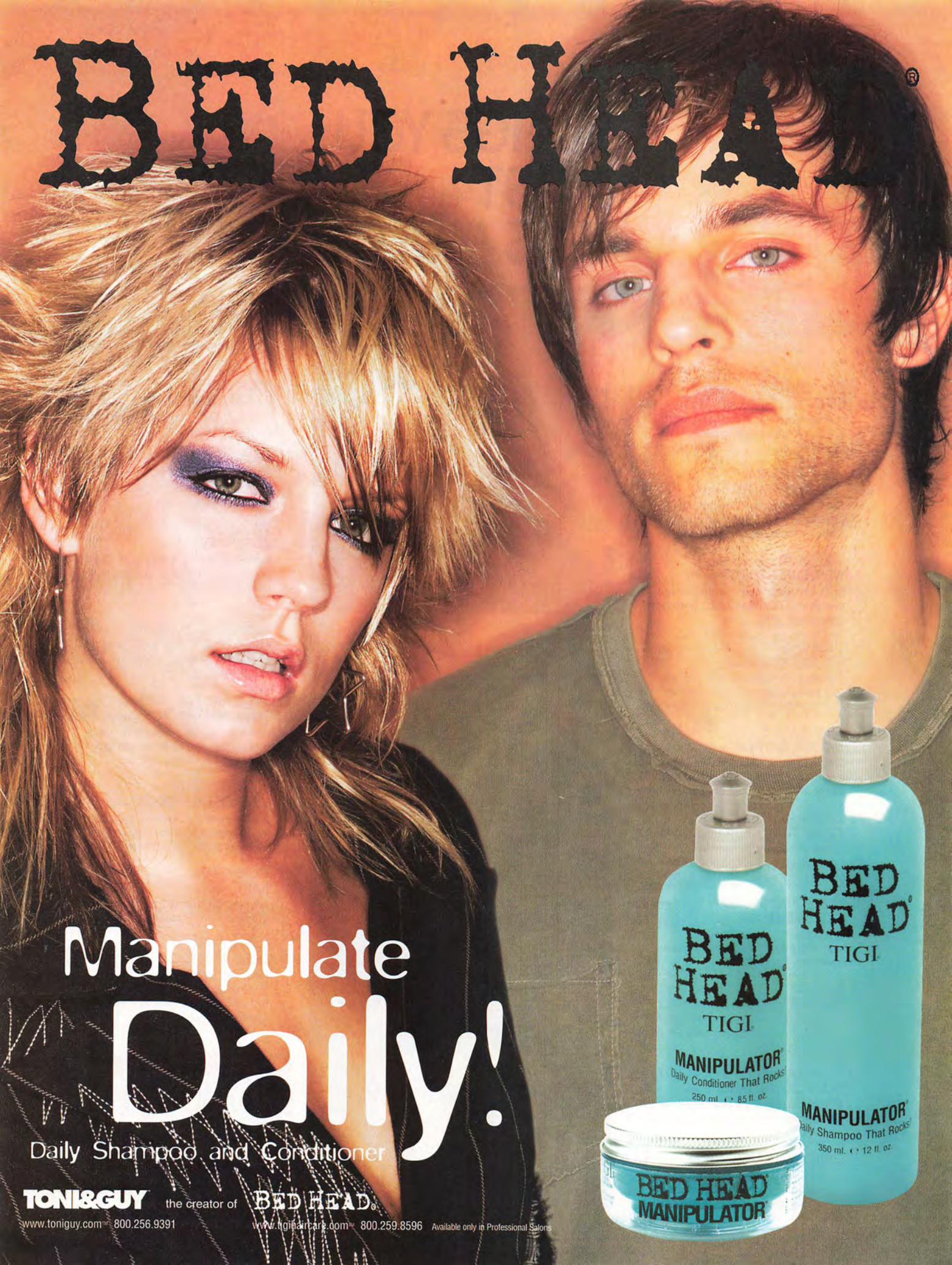
"I ask for forgiveness, because sometimes a man makes the name, but sometimes the name makes you. When [he was] Ason Unique, he was the kind of person who didn't eat no meat, who kept himself super clean; he walked like Mr. Spock. He would challenge anybody in a cipher. Every time he spoke, he spoke with wisdom."

"As he became Ol' Dirty Bastard, he became more successful, but he went further away from being Ason Unique. When we can't be satisfied with ourselves and find happiness, you find other means to make you happy, and what do that turn into? Alcohol, drugs and sex, yo. And the abuse of alcohol, drugs and sex will take any one of us outta here."

"He was like a cat with nine lives," said his daughter Taniqua, 16, at the funeral. "I guess this time he didn't have any more left." DOUGLAS CENTURY

"HE WAS LIKE A CAT THAT HAD NINE LIVES."

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2 CAM'RON

"GIRLS" ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM

This Harlem meanie sounds gangsta even when he's cribbing hooks from Cyndi Lauper.



3 KYLIE MINOGUE

"I BELIEVE IN YOU" CAPITOL

The diva from Down Under teams with the Scissor Sisters for this Donna Summer-indebted disco ballad.



4 THE GAME FEAT. 50 CENT

"WESTSIDE STORY" INTERSCOPE

Dr. Dre's new bullet-scarred protégé proves that Compton hasn't gotten any safer since 1992.



5 LUDACRIS

"GET BACK" DEF JAM SOUTH

Lesson #1 of Ludacris club etiquette: Don't invade his personal space unless you're in the market for a slapdown.



6 GRANDDADDY

"NATURE ANTHEM" ULTRA

This indie-rock campfire sing-along about harmony and friendship is simple, sweet and just the right amount of corny.



7 BECK FEAT. PHARRELL AND JAY-Z

"FRONTIN' ON DEBRA" ITUNES

On the first commercially available mash-up, Pharrell's syrupy come-ons glide across Beck's 1999 smooove R&B jam.



8 LCD SOUNDSYSTEM

"MOVEMENT" DFA

NYC's hipsterest dance-rock unit shifts gears, hammering out a synth-punk racket.



9 EMINEM

"ENCORE" SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE

A blazing posse cut — and the posse isn't D12! Dr. Dre, 50 Cent and Em trade tag-team taunts.



10 SAGE FRANCIS

"SLOW DOWN GANDHI" EPITAPH

Emo-rap's reigning weirdo snarls about conformity, minimum wage and Pepsi.



11 T.I.

"BRING 'EM OUT" ATLANTIC

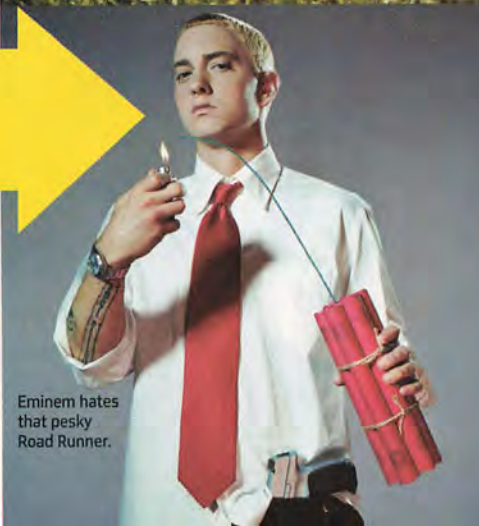
A Swizz Beatz bonanza of referee whistles, Jay-Z vocal samples and slurred strip-club toasts.



Kylie: "How did you know that I've been in a wind tunnel?"



Kings of Leon: "Next year, we plant alfalfa!"



Eminem hates that pesky Road Runner.

12 THE ARCADE FIRE

"NEIGHBORHOOD #2 (LAIKA)" MERGE

This Canadian quintet makes an irresistible, unlikely dance beat out of guitars, accordions and chimes.



13 NADA SURF

"IF YOU LEAVE" WARNER BROS.

A somber, O.C.-approved cover of OMD's *Pretty in Pink* staple.



14 FRANZ FERDINAND

"SHOPPING FOR BLOOD" EPIC

Howling dance-punk about SUVs and the nouveau riche.



15 THE ZUTONS

"ZUTON FEVER" EPIC

Rockabilly-tinged, saxophone-laced punk, ostensibly about getting really, really high.



16 U2

"SOMETIMES YOU CAN'T MAKE IT ON YOUR OWN" INTERSCOPE

In which Bono finally admits he is Jesus. In wraparounds.



17 JAY-Z AND LINKIN PARK

"JIGGA WHAT/FAINT" WARNER BROS.

In this surprisingly deft remix, rap's most arrogant man jams with rock's most insecure boys.



18 KINGS OF LEON

"KING OF THE RODEO" RCA

A bittersweet backwoods boogie, sung by a man who sounds beguilingly like Eric Cartman frenching a macaw.



19 PAVEMENT

"RAFT" MATADOR

An unearthed rarity from the new *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain* reissue.



20 CAT POWER

"DEEP INSIDE" NO LABEL

Recorded by the late DJ John Peel, Chan Marshall lends her sorrowful twang to Mary J. Blige's song about celebrity, identity and love.



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Ludacris

The voluminously haired rapper answers your questions about the important things in life: sex, guns, money, breaking people's arms and Clay Aiken.

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAINER HOSCH

"I CAN'T SAY *motherfucker* on *Regis and Kelly*?" Ludacris asks his publicist, brows knitting. "That's it. I'm canceling!"

He is, of course, joking. The Atlanta rapper may be one of hip-hop's lewder superstars, but he is too savvy a businessman to give up important TV exposure over the matter of a 12-letter word. The MC striding around the Manhattan offices of his record company is all business as he approves photos and makes deals on his cell.

In the studio, however, the 27-year-old rapper, born Chris Bridges, remains as raunchy as ever, proven by the title of his new CD *The Red Light District*, the follow-up to 2003's *Chicken-N-Beer*.

"My favorite red-light districts are in Germany and Amsterdam," he explains. "Yeah, there are a lot of things you can do in Amsterdam that you can't do here — a lot of things. But, to me, 'the red-light district' is also a state of mind."

In a few moments Ludacris's mind will start pondering your questions. But before then, we have a request to make. The last time the MC appeared in these pages, he defeated a *Blender* correspondent in the first ever "Ho'lympics" — a rap-oriented sports spectacle that included such events as hip-hop Scrabble, ATV racing and timed bra-unfastening.

The thing is, we were kind of hoping for a rematch.

"Man, whenever you want," he says, chuckling. "Just name the day and I'll beat your ass all over again!"

What's the worst job you've ever had?

IIHEARTCARSON27, LYNCHBURG, VA

I was a senior citizen's helper. I went to the store for him, mopped the floor, cleaned up after him. I did that for six months to a year when I was 15. I was getting under minimum wage, but I was making money at 15, so I was pretty happy about that. And he treated me good. He would always tell me when I didn't do a good enough job. That's something that everyone needs: to be

told that not everything you do is satisfactory, and that you have to do better. It was a life lesson.

What could you buy with the money you made rapping on Usher's "Yeah!"?

BIGMOUF112, LINCOLN, NE

I could definitely buy a house, for sure. Oh, yeah. Was I surprised how big that song became? No, because as soon as I heard it, even without me on it, I knew it was a hell of a hit record.

What's in your wallet right now?

2FAST2, ADDISON, VT

A black American Express card — that's the really powerful big American Express, the limitless one. I've got more credit cards in there as well, a lot of business cards and family pictures. There's no money. I don't keep money in my wallet.

How many girls have you been in bed with at once?

CHIXNBREW, WESTFIELD, NJ

The answer to that is, I have done a ménage à trois. But I really prefer one woman so that I can focus. Because, nowadays, it's not just about wildin' out. I prefer to devote all my attention to one girl.

Are you envious of any other MC's skills?

ALEX K, NEW YORK CITY

No. I think I'm the most versatile MC. I think I can do it all. Of course, *envy* is the wrong word. I get motivated by other rappers who have recreated their image more times than me, or who have been in the music industry longer and have kept a consistent career. But, I definitely feel like I'm the best.

Is it true you broke someone's arm when you were wrestling at high school?

LUDASGIRLB4, DYER, NV

Yeah. How did I know I'd broken his arm? Because the damn paramedics came out and said it. Of course, I felt bad for him, but I won the match, and it's not like I did it →

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★ LUDACRIS

on purpose. So, that being said, I hope I don't go to hell for saying it felt good.

If you could collaborate with any musician, alive or dead, who would it be?

MIKEYPANIK, ARCHCAPE, OR

Tupac, for sure. Because Tupac reached a lot of people emotionally, and music is all about emotion.

As the esteemed author of "Move Bitch" and "Blow It Out," do you have any catchphrases on your new CD?

VIVA7357, ALTON, MO

Oh, yeah. "Get back, you don't know me like that!" When you listen to the album you'll pick up on a lot of new phrases and slang. That's what hip-hop music is all about: creating new slang. 'Cause it's all about reinventing myself and continuing with this vocabulary we call hip-hop.

Will you still be calling yourself Ludacris when you're 90?

JONHATRIX, QUINCY, MA

When I'm 90? Ha! No. I would reminisce on the days of Ludacris. But I don't call myself Ludacris now. I call myself Chris.

Do you have "smash head" [a flattened Afro] when you wake up?

MRICOES, LAKEPORT, CA

I usually don't go to sleep with my hair out. I only wear my hair out during the day. I usually have it braided. It's really hard to sleep with all that damn hair out!

I know you're a gun enthusiast. I want to buy a gun for personal protection. What would you recommend?

PRE789, NEWTOWN, PA

Probably a Glock, the one the police use. That's kind of a basic starter gun.

Is there anything you haven't done because it was too dangerous?

THEWIZZA, MT. PLEASANT, MO

I want to get a motorcycle really bad. But every time I think about getting one, somebody's telling me about how they got hurt on theirs, and that's what stops me.

Did Ozzy Osbourne's accident make you think twice about riding ATV bikes?

SARAHHEROSE27, APOLLO BEACH, FL

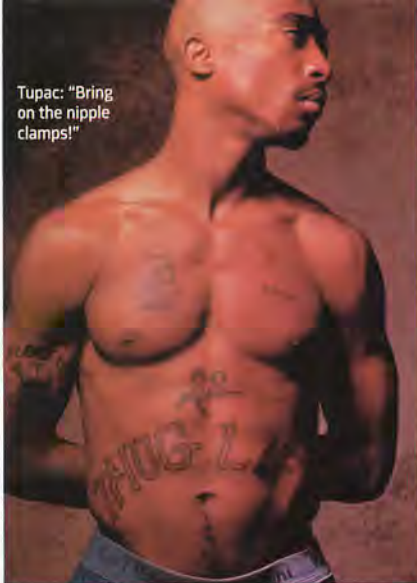
No, I love riding those. I don't know what he was doing, but I don't really try to wild out and do a lot of dangerous things on them. I keep it safe.

Have you ever written a lyric that was too raunchy to put out?

LUDFAN27, MEMPHIS

No, I say what I feel. But we did this song "Pussy Poppin'" [sample lyric: "Chinese splits-slits slide on down that pole-pole/ And feel this dick getting outta control-

Tupac: "Bring on the nipple clamps!"



trol"], and after I did it I was, like, "Damn! This is raunchy."

What was the best advice you have received about acting?

FATTY302, CHICAGO

Whenever the director has comments, tell them OK — and then keep doing it the way you want to do it.

How pissed were you when *Chicken-N-Beer* got knocked off the top of the charts by Clay Aiken?

RVALD01, ROCKTON, IL

I wasn't pissed because I know how powerful *American Idol* is. And it's not about being knocked off the top of the charts. It's about being consistent and being on the charts for a certain amount of time. Because he was number 1 that week and then he fell like a mother. He fell down a lot. Consistency is what's most important.

I'd rather be the tortoise than the hare.

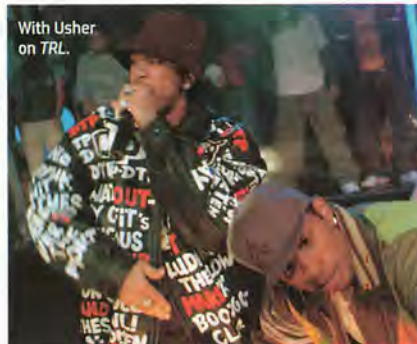
What movies are currently being screened at your "Ludaplex" mini-movie theater?

JACKIEPRINCE, DULUTH, CA

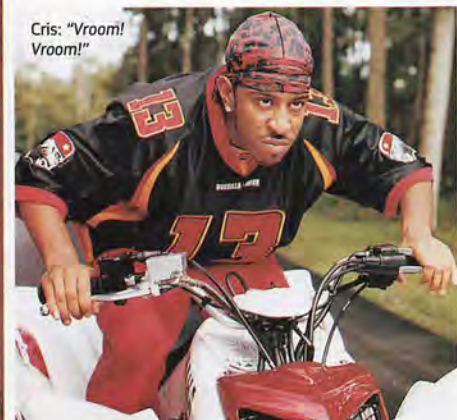
Envy, season two of *In Living*

Color and *Butterfly Effect* — that's a good movie. Now that I'm making movies, it really is a different experience watching them. You don't just look at it like a normal person would. You look at everything. You

With Usher on TRL.



Cris: "Vroom! Vroom!"



look at the direction, the producer, the casting, the acting. I definitely look at movies from a totally different perspective now.

When was the last time a girl turned you down?

INSNEINBRN, HOT SPRINGS, AR

About two weeks ago. Yeah, man, just because of who I am don't think I don't get turned down.

Which city has the most beautiful women?

M_HAUSER, CHARLESTON, SC

Capetown, South Africa, I would say. It's just my preference. I think African women are beautiful.

Do you listen to any music other than hip-hop?

MISSCOOT, BRONX, NY

Oh, hell yeah. I love rock & roll music, man. I love Three Doors Down, Linkin Park. I like Nickelback, the Red Hot Chili Peppers. That's just to name a few.

What's the strangest gift you've ever received from a fan?

AVRILNTRNG, DAVILLE, CA

I could tell you the strangest fan I've ever seen. This girl had "Luda" stitched into the gold grill in her damn teeth. I think it was permanent. That was pretty wild.

What's your favorite way to prepare chicken?

JONBON44, NILE, OH

I really like rotisserie. But I can't cook worth shit, man.

What's your favorite part of the female anatomy?

TWILIGHT, BEDFORD, NH

Her mind. Then comes her butt. Gluteus maximus!

Do you have any good sex tips?

JILLIANSH21, WEST OCEAN CITY, MD

Don't rush anything, just take everything real slow. I always say that exploring is the best thing, because you'll find things that she likes.

Is there anything better than women and beer?

ETMUKUSHA, NECHES, TX

Peace of mind is better than all that. [BLENDER]



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The Greatest Songs Ever **Led Zeppelin**

BLENDER EXPLORES THE FINEST TUNES IN HISTORY

Led Zeppelin,
1970, from left:
Robert Plant,
John Bonham,
Jimmy Page and
John Paul Jones

Black Dog

How a week in a haunted English manor in the dead of winter inspired **Led Zeppelin**'s smoldering blues-rock come-on. "Hey, hey, mama..."



BY WINTER 1970, rock-god avatars Led Zeppelin were three blockbuster albums into their career.

Comprising former Yardbird and session guitarist Jimmy Page, classically trained John Paul Jones and two working-class Midlanders in singer Robert Plant and drummer John "Bonzo" Bonham, album number four should have seen them cruising. Instead it was, as Jimmy Page remarked, "make or break," a riposte to their critics who, despite the band's huge success in America, saw them as derivative and opportunistic.

After initial sessions at Island Studios in London, they decamped to Headley Grange, a three-story manor house in the Hampshire countryside in southern England. They'd rehearsed there previously, but now, in the depths of winter, John Bonham sensed the place had deteriorated. Tour manager Richard Cole, in his *Stairway to Heaven* memoir, recalled reminding Bonham "that during our last visit we had sacrificed a banister to the gods when we needed firewood."

Perhaps it was the cold, but Led Zeppelin kept to a grueling schedule. They would write and rehearse for a week. Then the Rolling Stones' mobile recording studio was booked to record the album. They hired it for just six days.

"Jimmy had the nickname 'Led Wallet,' and it's true, he was a bit tight," says Andy Johns, brother of legendary producer Glyn Johns and engineer on *Led Zeppelin IV*. "Mick Jagger had offered us his baronial mansion Stargroves for £1,000 a week and Jimmy wouldn't pay it. So we ended up in this 20-by-25-foot room with Bonzo playing drums in the hallway."

Chief songwriters Page and Plant arrived with 12 taped songs, including fragments of a tune that would evolve into the epic "Stairway to Heaven." But uncharacteristically, Jones stepped in with a riff inspired by a track on the Muddy Waters LP *Electric Mud*.

"I wanted to try electric blues with a rolling bass part," Jones said. "Black Dog" was born.

Zep fans knew of Page's keen interest in occultist Aleister Crowley. But any of them believing "Black Dog" carried some satanic resonance were off-base.

"There was a black dog hanging around Headley Grange," the guitarist says with a shrug.

"Jimmy thought he'd seen a ghost there too," Johns adds. "The rest of us moaned about being cold, but Jimmy was more concerned with creepy noises or flying fucking furniture."

It was agreed that Jones's idea would provide an ideal opener for the new album. To get the intense, dense sound, Page's guitars were triple-tracked and recorded directly from the mixing desk rather than amplified.

"I stole the idea from Bill Halverson, who worked with Buffalo Springfield," Johns says. "And you never had any problem convincing Jimmy his guitar should be as loud as possible."

"That's the guitar army waking up: Rise and shine," Page said of the song's intro.

But raw power wasn't what they were after. That would obliterate Plant's erotic "Hey, hey, mama, said the way you move." Page suggested an a cappella stop-start vocal after hearing Fleetwood Mac's "Oh Well."

Meanwhile, Bonham, who often approached his drum kit like it was an old piece of furniture that needed smashing into more manageable pieces, proved capable of great subtlety. Ensnared in Headley Grange's vast hallway, he perfected the song's deceptively simple time-signature variations (4/4 with a 5/4 variation), inspired in part by his knowledge of Little Richard's "Keep a Knockin'."

"The band is getting really attuned to time slips," Plant enthused. "We were messing around when the other lads suddenly came up with that passage on 'Black Dog.' They just played it, fell about all over the floor for 20 minutes in fits of laughter, played it again, burst into more laughter, then put it down on tape."

All they needed now was a suitable banshee wail. "Black Dog" was a primal howl that nodded to the blues greats who inspired so much British '60s rock. Plant's lyrics followed this tradition: Essentially an essay on relationships that could've been written by a caveman, the author bemoans a long-legged girl who's good at sex but otherwise unreliable.

"There are moguls of lyrics-writing in every generation, and I guess I'm just

below the mogul zone," Plant later manfully conceded.

"Black Dog" embodied the sound of a peerless drummer, a transcendent vocalist and two multitasking musicians pushing each other to new heights.

"Before Zeppelin, when I'd played with Bonzo, we felt we were the best," Plant said. "With Page and Jones, suddenly we weren't. You were challenged and everything you wanted was in that room."

The album was completed in August 1971, and its artwork would arouse a fair amount of controversy. Page decided the new record would

eschew all marketing considerations: Its sleeve would

bear no title, no band name, no record-label logo.

"If the music was good, we could call ourselves 'The Cabbage' and still get across to our audience,"

Page explained. But the cover's cryptic runic symbolism would give rise to all manner of dark, occultist speculation. Atlantic Records executives believed the band was committing commercial suicide. Nevertheless, after prolonged mixing difficulties, the officially untitled album was released in November 1971.

The album has since become known as "Led Zeppelin IV," the "Runes album," "Zoso" (after a misreading of the album's symbols) or "Untitled." With "Stairway to Heaven," the band wrote the pomp-rock ballad *par excellence*. And "Black Dog" became an instant FM hit; it remains playlisted more than 30 years on.

"When I was 14," remembers Velvet Revolver guitarist and Guns N' Roses alum Slash, "I stayed with my grandmother in L.A. She was a middleclass black woman with fine Southern manners. I'd play 'Black Dog' full volume, and she'd shout, 'Stop playing that honky-tonk music!' It was the biggest, baddest, sexiest riff out there."

It was also an unforgettable opening to 42 minutes of music, which, at 22 million copies sold, became the fourth-highest-selling album in history.

MICHAEL ODELL

VITAL STATISTICS

SONG
"Black Dog"

BAND
Led Zeppelin

LABEL
Atlantic

PERFORMERS
John Paul Jones
bass

Jimmy Page
guitars

John Bonham
drums

Robert Plant
vocals

PRODUCER
Jimmy Page

CHART DEBUT
December 1971

HIGHEST CHART
POSITION
15

WEEKS ON CHART
12



WHO'S WHO

JIMMY PAGE

Former session guitarist known for his interest in the occult. Recently the first artist to be honored in the British Walk of Fame.

ANDY JOHNS

Engineer on *Led Zeppelin IV*. Drifted out of the picture when the mixing of the album proved to be disastrous.

JOHN "BONZO" BONHAM

Highly influential drummer who choked to death on his own vomit in 1980 after drinking 40 shots of vodka.



Ask Blender

SOLVING YOUR POP CONUNDRUMS SINCE 2001



Good Charlotte and (R) a different Good Charlotte.

I know Good Charlotte got their name from a children's book, but why did they choose it?

BECCA HOWE, PORTLAND, ME

It wasn't because it was an old childhood favorite of theirs. In fact, the book, written by Carol Beach York, was only published in 1994, not long before the band formed, in 1996. Singer Joel Madden simply spotted the cover at the house of a friend whose mother was a teacher and nabbed the title without really even seeing what it was about.

But the band did eventually read the story of the misunderstood girl who lives with her grandmother, and even came to appreciate the story's significance. "It's about a little girl who no one understands, and everyone mistreats her," Benji Madden said. "We did read the book afterward. Though we didn't plan on it, it actually tells us a little bit about us."

My friend claims that Kiss's Paul Stanley produced some of the early sessions for Guns N' Rose's *Appetite For Destruction*. Is he right?

GLENN LAWRENCE, SEATTLE, WA

Nope. Having decided that their first demo, produced by Spencer Proffer, was "too fuckin' radio," the band cast the net for a producer for their debut who understood their raw live energy. The Kiss frontman was a contender, but they pissed each other off even before reaching the studio.

Slash invited Stanley to the band's pad and they had serious talks about collaborating. But, after listening to the demo, Stanley picked out two of the band's favorite songs and said he wanted to rewrite them. Said Axl: "It was over right then and there."

After the newcomers hit big, there was no love lost between Rose and Stanley. In October 1987, the Guns N' Roses singer even said: "People like Paul Stanley from Kiss can suck my dick!" (Ever the diplomat, he said the same thing about Jon Bon Jovi.)

Did Donna Summer really say AIDS was God's vengeance on gay people?

NATHAN GARRETT, SAVANNAH, GA

With different witnesses saying different things about the incident, there's no definitive answer. Certainly, for a disco



Are those vultures with the shaggy heads in *The Jungle Book* meant to be the Beatles?

J.J. OLSON, FREMONT, CA

Yes, those weird London accents notwithstanding, the four mop-topped vultures were a nod to the Beatles. In fact, this homage is all that remains of a bizarre plan for the Fab Four to provide the movie's music. Manager Brian Epstein entered talks with the Disney Corporation in August 1965 about collaborating on their new feature, a loose adaptation of the Rudyard Kipling story. But the idea of getting into bed with Disney was never likely to get past John Lennon, still bitter about the recent ABC Beatles cartoon series.

According to one contemporary account, when Epstein told him about



the plan, Lennon flipped. "There's no way the Beatles are gonna sing for Mickey fucking Mouse," he reportedly raged at his bewildered manager. "You can tell Walt Disney to fuck off. Tell him to get Elvis off his fat arse, he's into making crap fucking movies."

That outburst brought negotiations to an abrupt close, but the Beatles-esque vultures remained in the final movie (eventually released in 1967); their likenesses were originally supposed to be far closer but, according to one report, Walt Disney himself had them toned down because he believed no one would remember the Beatles in five years time.

diva to launch an attack on her main fan base would be an eccentric act of career suicide. But in 1983, Summer was in a strange place; since experiencing a downturn in her career, she had overcome a period of suicidal despair by embracing born-again Christianity. This alone was enough to antagonize some of her fan base who saw her allying herself with right-wing gay-haters.

Then, during one concert in Indiana during the tour supporting "She Works Hard For The Money," she hoped to clear up some of the confusion over her new beliefs, saying she

would discuss any matters with people after the show. What happened next isn't clear, but with around 500 people remaining, she entered into a knotty discussion over whether her Christian beliefs meant that she considered gays in need of saving themselves. The debate became particularly heated with one member of the crowd.

"We said things back and forth," she recalled. "He said it. He said that I said it, but that's not what I said!"

Some gay fans agreed with her version of events. Others disagreed and point to the fact that she made comments at other shows claiming: "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve."

Either way, the idea of Donna Summer as pop's foremost anti-gay, gay icon stuck. Despite her denials, apologies and AIDS charity concerts, the problematic business still dogs her career. [BLENDER]



Stanley and (R) GN'R



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CARRY MY PIMP CUP!



When hip-hop megastar **Lil Jon** asked three *Blender* staffers to join his entourage for a weekend of booze-fueled crunkiness, there was only one thing to say: *Okaaay!*

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY NAOMI HARRIS

"DO YOU MIND having your dick sucked on camera?"

It is around 3 in the morning when Lil Jon poses this question to *Blender*. But, despite the lateness of the hour and the number of empty liquor bottles scattered around Miami's Hit Factory recording studio, there is no doubt it is being asked in dead seriousness.

To be fair, I am largely responsible for prompting Jon's query. For the past 12 hours, a team of three *Blender* staffers — myself, Senior Editor Victoria DeSilverio and Associate Photo Editor Tom Payne — have embedded ourselves in Lil Jon and the East Side Boyz's entourage. We have ordered their food, laughed at their jokes and even shared their stage. True, we have not asked Jon if he can arrange for us to "do blow off a naked chick's ass," as

one Team *Blender* member suggested. But we have asked if it would be possible to appear in the next installment of Jon's hugely successful *American Sex* porn series. It is this request that has prompted the King of Crunk to find out what yours truly would be prepared to do should my wish be granted.

"No, seriously," Jon says. "Would you mind having your dick sucked on camera?"
Uh . . . Well . . . Umm . . . Okaaay!

"Then you can be in one of my porn movies," he chuckles. "Man, you *Blender* people are getting fresh."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A PROPER ENTOURAGE is as essential a part of a celebrity's persona as having a big house, an expensive foreign car, a prescription drug addiction and idiotically

named offspring. From Leonardo DiCaprio to P. Diddy, the megafamous rarely venture out without a posse of managers, publicists, bodyguards, stylists, friends, friends-of-friends and friends of theirs. The phenomenon has even inspired its own HBO sitcom, the Young Hollywood dude-fest *Entourage*.

But is being a member of an entourage really, as the TV show suggests, a 24/7 whirlwind of clubbing, drugs, free designer clothes and swimming-pool sex? To find out, three lucky *Blender* staffers were sent to join an actual, real-life entourage.

And what better entourage to join than that of Lil Jon?

A red-hot and almost omnipresent figure in hip-hop even before Dave Chapelle's good-natured mocking of his signature catch phrases ("Whaat?", "Okaaay!" and "Yeaah-yuh!") the Atlanta-based rapper-producer is also a legendary party animal with a penchant for good times, hard liquor and, yes, self-made porn.

Jon is not only happy to cooperate but suggests we accompany him for an

ENTOURAGES PROMISE A **24/7 WHIRLWIND**
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"Of course, the pimp cup dates back to 1721."



"Who are you people?" (left to right) Clark, Tom, Lil Jon and Victoria



action-packed weekend in Miami, where he's due to play a show, put the finishing touches to his new album, *Crunk Juice*, and hit the red carpet at hip-hop magazine *The Source*'s awards show. The only problem is that we have next to no idea how we're expected to behave. Desperate for advice, we ring up Larry Geller, Elvis's personal hairdresser and a longtime member of the King's entourage.

"It's absolutely important to have a role," Geller instructs. "I was there to do Elvis's hair. He had a beautiful head of hair, but it was baby-fine, so someone needed to do it all the time. Also, most people in entoursages say 'yes' all the time because they want to hang on to their position. But, personally, I think you should tell the star the truth. You want them to know that you're there to support them, whether it's telling them the truth or taking a bullet for them."

Sorry, what was that bit about "taking a bullet"?

"Being in an entourage can be dangerous," Geller says. "Death threats come in to these people all the time."

We're relieved to learn, though, that Lil Jon is a lover, not a fighter, according to Bryan Leach, the TVE Records A&R man who signed Jon.

"Jon is a very easy person to hang with," Leach says. "He carries all kinds of people around with him. Jon likes to spread the love around. Also, Jon likes to party. You might find that . . . testing."

Do you mean feeling-a-little-tipsy testing? Or being-rushed-to-the-hospital-to-have-our-stomachs-pumped testing?

"That depends on your tolerance level," Leach answers. "All I can say is you've been forewarned."

The *Blender* crew is further forewarned when we finally arrive at Lil Jon's Miami hotel, the insanely plush Mandarin.

"Please eat," Jon's publicist, Joe Wiggins, says upon meeting us. "Please, please, please eat. You're going to need something to soak up the alcohol. I can only look after you guys so much. I mean, I'll pick you up off the floor but . . . I can only do so much."

★★★★★

"WELCOME!" SAYS EAST Side Boyz member Big Sam, waving around a gasoline can emblazoned with the words "Crunk Juice." "Welcome to the first we're-alcoholics-but-we-don't-give-a-fuck-let's-keep-drinking meeting!"

It is barely an hour since *Blender* has checked in and already we've been handed an entourage-type task. Unfortunately, the task is not, despite Sam's pronouncement, to get ass-drunk. It is, rather, to be extras in a TV spot for Lil Jon's new CD. What this basically involves is standing around a large room at the Mandarin Hotel holding up signs that say "Crunk Or Die" while a besuited Jon rants like some crunk-infused presidential candidate about the fact that his album, unlike most, has "more than one damn song on it." To enhance the general Lil-Jon-as-

politician vibe, Sam and his fellow East Side Boy Lil Bo stand to each side of him playing secret-servicemen.

At first, it's a genuine thrill to be part of the action. But by the sixth or seventh take, a feeling of boredom has set in. To pass the time we give ourselves suitably entourage-ish nicknames. Victoria dubs herself "Li'l Vee" while Tom opts for "Tommy Drama" after Kevin Dillon's *Entourage* character Johnny Drama. We are still pondering what mine should be when the shoot concludes and Lil Jon wanders over to meet the newest members of his "crew." He tells us that we should just concentrate on having a good time, then asks us to introduce ourselves: First Tom, then Victoria and finally . . .

Hi, I'm Clark.

Even with signature dark glasses covering half his face, it's clear Lil Jon is confused.

"Cock?" he asks.

Uh, no, not "Cock," it's . . .

"What kind of name is 'Cock'?" he says, exploding in laughter.

Well, Mr. Jon, as I was saying before . . .

"Hey everybody!" Jon says, →



MOTLEY CREWS

Lil Jon isn't the first to tote around a pack of ego-boosting ass-kissers . . .

THE MEMPHIS MAFIA

BIG CHEESE: Elvis Presley

SUPPORTING CAST: This crew of loyal homies accompanied Elvis everywhere from 1956 through his death in 1977.

CODEPENDENCY LEVEL: The gold standard by which all bloodsucking celebrity entourages must be measured.

THE RAT PACK

BIG CHEESE: Frank Sinatra

SUPPORTING CAST: Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Joey Bishop and Peter Lawford.

CODEPENDENCY LEVEL: Though Ol' Blue Eyes was the *capo di tutti capi*, the other Rat Packers earned reputations as philandering, tux-clad luses long before Sinatra offered them his considerable coattails.

THE MANSON FAMILY

BIG CHEESE: Charles Manson

SUPPORTING CAST: They weren't related, but Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel and Leslie Van Houten were bonded by the sisterhood of being totally fucking crazy.

CODEPENDENCY LEVEL: Without a charismatic leader like Manson to guide them through senseless killings in the Hollywood Hills, these confused, drug-addled disciples may have grown up to be studio execs.

THE SEVEN DWARVES

BIG CHEESE: Snow White

SUPPORTING CAST: Grumpy, Sneezy, Dopey, Sleepy . . . Topsy, um, Rudolph, and the rest.

CODEPENDENCY LEVEL: High. Had they not stumbled upon the roofed young maiden, these guys would've been just another pack of workaholic midgets living in the woods, miles from female contact.

THE WATERGATE CONSPIRATORS

BIG CHEESE: Richard Milhous Nixon

SUPPORTING CAST: John Dean, G. Gordon Liddy, H. R. Haldeman, John Mitchell

CODEPENDENCY LEVEL: Without Tricky Dick, these guys would have had no direction in which to channel their evil. **STEVE KANDELL**

addressing the crowd still milling around from the shoot. "This guy's name is Cock!"

Having deftly resolved the nickname issue, Jon disappears to his suite for a nap, leaving us to hang out by the hotel pool with the managers, assistants and musical cohorts who make up his day-to-day crew. Unlike the HBO show, everyone in Jon's dozen-strong posse seems to have an actual job, except, of course, us. But, according to Jon's DJ, Dirty Red, that could soon change. Dirty Red is Lil Bo's cousin and, after being fired from his job at a hardware store a couple of years back, he was initially invited to join Jon's entourage as a luggage-toting gofer.

"People said to me, 'Why are you doing that? You're not getting any money,'" he recalls. "But I knew it would pay off in the end."

It did. One day, the band's regular DJ, Rob Mitchell, couldn't make a show, so Red stood in for him. He did such a good job that, when Mitchell was promoted to tour manager, Dirty Red became permanent DJ for an act that is rapidly becoming one of music's most successful. The last Lil Jon and the East Side Boyz album, 2002's *Kings of Crunk*, went double-platinum. Dirty Red guesstimates that *Crunk Juice* "will do 5 million."

"If you hang around long enough," Red says, "you'll find something to do. You know, the East Side Boyz need an assistant —"

"Hey, I could do that!" says Lil' Vee, as the nearby pool reflects the dazzling Florida sunset. "I would totally quit my job."

Our dreams of alternative employment are interrupted by the arrival of a massive stretch Humvee, here to transport us to tonight's concert, an outdoor affair organized by local radio station Power 96. Actually, it's here to transport Lil Jon and the real entourage. For reasons not made clear, *Blender* will travel behind in its own limo. This, to be honest, is something of a bummer. Momentarily unmoored from our celebrity mothership, the most exciting thing we can think to do is eat some mints.

But, what occurs when we arrive — minty fresh! — at the venue exceeds all our entourage dreams. Told we would be able to watch the show from a good vantage point, *Blender* assumed we'd be standing beside the stage. Instead, we are ushered onto the stage just a few feet away from where Lil Jon is karate-chopping the air, demanding that tracks be halted for not being "crunk enough" and ultimately whipping the crowd into a

frenzy with his new single "What You Gon' Do."

Tommy Drama, after overcoming the shock of facing 5,000 screaming fans and standing next to Wyclef Jean, hands out bottles of water to Lil Jon. Lil' Vee, meanwhile, heeds Bryan Leach's advice not to ignore the East Side Boyz. She's been hanging out with Big Sam and is rewarded by being offered his gasoline can of Crunk Juice — a mixture of Hennessy and Jon's Crunk energy drink that she later hails as "very warm and alcoholic." Most of the time, however, we simply stand around trying not to look too much like pale fifth wheels.

Yet, if we're not doing much right, it seems we're not doing much wrong, either, and after the show, the *Blender* team is among a very select group allowed backstage to "hang" with Jon. Or, as one mountainous security guard says, thrillingly, to another, as we walk into the dressing room, "It's OK, they're *Blender*, they're cool." Better yet, later, as we reluctantly trudge back to our limo, we are signaled to get into Jon's Hummer. It naturally features a bowel-looseningly loud stereo, which, as we head off to the studio, Jon takes control of, flipping from one hip-hop station to another. An unfeasible number of the tunes being played feature our new pal/boss.

"Two out of five times I turn on the radio, it's me," Jon says.



But for all his braggadocio, Lil Jon still has five tracks to finish for his new album in just a couple of days. At the Hit Factory studios,

"TWO OUT OF FIVE TIMES I TURN ON THE RADIO, IT'S ME." LIL JON

Jon is now all work, tinkering with beats and recording vocals while we're handed a growing list of tasks that includes finding him a clean T-shirt and hunting down an alarming amount of Patron tequila. And Jon isn't the only person working here tonight, as is evidenced by the Rolls-Royce Phantom that sits in the space reserved for "Ms. Elliott."

"Damn, I've got to get into the studio more often," Jon says, admiring the vehicle during a break from recording. "I've got to get one of those."

The rapper's envy is further tweaked by the presence of Missy Elliott's producer Timbaland, who shows us his half-a-million-dollars'-worth of Porsche Carrera. Then, to complete this particular hip-hop summit, gangsta-rap legends the Geto Boys arrive with their own posse, which



Clark:
"I smell a
Pulitzer..."

impresses both in terms of size and the number of members who are in wheelchairs or on crutches. Leading the way is one-eyed rapper/small person Bushwick Bill, who makes a beeline for the crew from *Blender* to ask if we have anything to smoke. When we offer to find him some cigarettes, Bill is unimpressed.

"I don't want any fucking cigarettes," he declares and wanders off.

This faux pas aside, things seem to be going better. We are invited to partake in several rounds of tequila shots and to join Jon in the studio's TV room as he holds forth on his favorite cartoons ("I like *Dexter's Laboratory* — that's my nigga right there") and agrees that, yes, *Blender* can be in one of his porn movies. Alas, they are not shooting one at the moment. But, seizing the opportunity to curry favor with him, we suggest that he puts out a range of Jon-endorsed products: Crunk Condoms.

"That could be cool," he says. "But I'd want it super-lubricated. Like the tip explodes and there's more lubrication."

A moral quandary follows: Should *Blender* agree with its bossman? Or follow Larry Geller's advice and tell the truth, that exploding condoms are not, perhaps, the best idea in the world? In the end, no one says anything.

Then again, by now, it's clear the off-duty Lil Jon can probably work this out for himself. With his sunglasses off and his guard now down, the former Jonathan Smith comes across as a serious and eloquent individual capable of ruminating on everything from old movies to the pros and cons of the electoral college.

"People think it's all glitz and glamour," he says. "But it's damn hard work."

It is not until it's 5 in the morning and we're back in the Hummer that Jon once again adopts the "Lil Jon" persona, slipping his glasses back on his face and forcing more Patron on us. Of the *Blender* party, only one demurs: our photographer, Naomi Harris, who has heartburn — a condition she's trying to alleviate by massaging her chest.



Onstage: "Devil's
sign: check! Crunk
Juice: check! No
reason at all to be
here: check!"



"My fellow
Democrat..."
(left to right)
Big Sam, and
Lil Jon

"Do you want me to rub that for you?" gurgles Lil Jon.

THE NEXT EVENING at 6 o'clock, the blisteringly hung-over *Blender* team assembles in the foyer of the Mandarin to take a car to the Source Awards. We're to meet Lil Jon and the East Side Boyz at the venue. As Jermaine Dupri's posse have arrived and started to eye us suspiciously, we move outside and get into the stretch limo we assume is there for us. It's not until we are halfway to the awards that the car company calls Li'l Vee on her cell to tell us our Subaru is waiting outside the Mandarin. It seems entirely possible

that we have stolen Jermaine Dupri's ride. This, it is agreed, is a very entourage thing to have done.

We are deposited at the red carpet — actually a black carpet — to be met by Lil Jon's publicist and informed that, because of some last-minute problem between him and *The Source*, the Crunkmeister may not be turning up. This means we may well be the only three people "representing" Lil Jon tonight, and represent we do, parading down the black carpet throwing a rough approximation of some hip-hop-style signs. The paparazzi, clearly assuming we are at least mildly famous, go crazy, instantly dubbing Victoria "Little Paris" and begging that she spend time posing for each and everyone one of them.

"For a second there, that felt very real," Tommy Drama says afterward.

Suddenly, we get word that Lil Jon has arrived and, humiliateingly, we retrace our steps to hit the red carpet again, this time with Jon. By now, our posing has become so extravagant that we all but obscure the real star from the photographers — especially because it's now so late that there are, ironically, a lot less paparazzi than before.

Too soon, it is time to bid Lil Jon adieu. As junior entourage members, we do not have tickets to the awards them-

selves and, in any case, have to fly home for work the next day.

"You guys were cool, though," says the rapper. "You were useful, you hung in there. I won't forget you in a hurry."

And with that, Lil Jon disappears inside and we're left to return to our dull, humdrum, entourage-free, pimp-cup-less lives. We're pondering our sad fate when Lil Bo returns with a question for Li'l Vee.

"Hey, is it true that you're interested in being our assistant?" [BLENDER]



"Look,
I'm poking
Lil Jon!"



The Osbournes:
"Where the f*%#@
is Mr. Ducky?"



HOW TO SURVIVE ...

YOUR ROCK-STAR

MARR

Love on the rocks? Ain't no surprise — if you're a musician! Which is why *Blender* assembled a panel of experts, including Sharon Osbourne and Dave Navarro, to guide addled pop stars in their hopeless search for deep, committed monogamy.

BY STEVE KANDELL

DATE ABOVE

YOUR STATION

If it weren't for rock stardom — however fleeting — the likes of Gavin Rossdale, Chris Robinson and Spacehog's Royston Langdon would most likely not be bedding and wedding comely starlets Gwen Stefani, Kate Hudson and Liv Tyler, respectively.

"These are gorgeous, talented women," Sharon Osbourne says. "I think Kate and Liv sold themselves short with two fuckin' has-been rockers." The lesson: Milk that tortured artist routine for everything it's worth, because it works.

"Nothing in the world is more exciting than being with a rock star," advice columnist E. Jean Carroll says. "We all fall in love and lose it over somebody, but it's 20 times more exciting to lose it over a guitarist."

How else to explain how semitalented Stephan Jenkins of Third Eye Blind fame landed both Charlize Theron and Vanessa Carlton in quick succession?

I

A

G

E

★ MARITAL DOS AND DON'TS



FIND COMMON INTERESTS, OTHER THAN SMOKING CRACK

It's always important for couples to bond over shared hobbies. But when those hobbies include, say, rampant crack binges and assault with a deadly weapon, as was the case with longtime codependents (and codefendants) Rick James and girlfriend Tanya Anne Hijazi, expect trouble.

"Smoking crack is the stupid-est thing you can do," says advice columnist E. Jean Carroll, "but it does keep people together."

On the surface, the codependency may appear exciting, but the reality is grim. Former junkie and Jane's Addiction guitarist Dave Navarro married Carmen Electra last year, but he believes that such stability would never have been possible during his heroin heyday. "Drugs may be good for storytelling," the shirt-phobic Navarro says, "but they're not good for the soul."

DON'T BROADCAST YOUR RELATIONSHIP ON TV

New marriages are tough enough without exposing every household spat to millions of enraptured couch potatoes. While Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey may have seen their Q-ratings soar since the debut of *Newlyweds*, the notoriety may come at a high cost. "As a career move, the show is fantastic," Sharon Osbourne says, "but for their marriage, definitely not. When you've been with someone for a long time and you're secure with your relationship, it's very different, but Nick and Jessica are so young."

Surprisingly, the biggest danger isn't that an audience is watching your every move, it's the fear that the audience may one day disappear. "Celebrities have the exact same problems with relationships as anyone else," says Dr. Drew Pinsky, who has seen his share of dysfunctional musicians pass through the halls of his *Loveline* radio show. "The



And that's how Jessica gave Nick a double hernia.

added stress comes not from being famous but with the need to maintain that level of fame."

OR, RATHER, DO BROADCAST YOUR RELATIONSHIP ON TV

For many couples, having a sex tape stolen and watched by millions on the Internet would spell certain doom, but for unembarassable Tommy Lee and his buxom bride Pam Anderson, this unfortunate turn of events actually made them stronger. (Well, before she had him hauled to the pokey, anyway.) E. Jean Carroll considers the notorious hijinks-on-the-high-seas video to be nothing less than required viewing

for anyone who wants to see what a happy relationship looks like. "She was adorable; he was hung like a horse — we were all incredibly jealous of their sex life," Carroll says. "He may have had a temper, but in the video they were glorious and loved each other so much. Forget cheesy self-help books — that tape was a great service to mankind."

DON'T MARRY THE HELP

As Jennifer Lopez found out and Britney Spears inevitably will, getting hitched to a backup dancer is a bad, bad idea . . . albeit a wholly inevitable one for some. "You live in a fantasy bubble when you're on tour, so you lean on each other for support," Navarro says. But once the tour's over, there's that little matter of employer-employee fraternization that never bodes well for the dynamics of a relationship. "It never works unless the two people can be equal," Osbourne says. "I mean, come on. Who's paying the fucking rent?"

DON'T KISS AND TELL

While stars of yore were content to let their sexcapades be the stuff of mythmaking mystique, today's quasi-sensitive rock dudes update their fans with TMI-laden posts on personal websites. (Yes, we're looking at you, Fred Durst.) "Insecure people flaunt it," Osbourne says. "Robert Plant had every woman in the world, but he'd never gloat." Says E. Jean Carroll: "The essence of a rock star is mystery. Make your art, and then don't comment on anything else."



Chris and Gwyneth: "Let's never wash our clothes together."

"ROCK STARS CAN'T HAVE BABIES. ROCK STARS ARE BABIES."



Britney and Kevin: "Giddy up, Federline!"

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REMEMBER: GROUPIES MAKE FOR POOR SOULMATES

Little-known fact: Rock stars have unfettered access to hordes of willing sexual partners, 24/7. But the chances of one of these backstage Betties turning out to be a suitable life partner fall somewhere between slim and none. "Don't think that strippers or groupies are going to make good girlfriends," Dr. Drew warns. "They thrive on drama and chaos and addiction."

The problem, according to Navarro, is that what for the rock star is merely a matter of the loins becomes a matter of the heart for the groupie, and that leads to complications. Like, feelings and stuff. "I got bored of groupies a long time ago," says Navarro. "If you need sexual gratification, you're better off with a prostitute: No one gets hurt, and they go away when it's over."

DON'T, DON'T, DON'T REPRODUCE

Sure, famously strung-out musicians claim that the blessed event of paternity forces them to reevaluate their priorities and get on the straight-and-narrow,



but Carroll says not to believe a word. "Rock stars can't have babies," she says. "Rock stars are babies. They'll be brought back to Earth at first, but they're still the most self-centered people in the world. That's what makes them so attractive." Despite the seeming natural daddyness of Coldplay's Chris Martin, Carroll says that the responsibility is better suited to someone with the time and selflessness to properly raise a child. Even worse, parenthood leads to abominably sappy songwriting. To wit, Creed's "With Arms Wide Open."

DON'T GET WITH ANOTHER ROCK STAR

It's hard enough for celebrities to have successful relationships with other celebrities (cf. "Benifer"), but being with someone who's in the same line of work is a recipe for certain disaster. Just ask Britney and Justin. Or Usher and Chilli. Or Brodie Dalle and Tim Armstrong. Or . . . "After the honeymoon phase, it always becomes competitive," Osbourne says. Adds Carroll: "When one career takes off and the other doesn't, that spells big trouble. You cannot help but resent the other person, no matter how much you love them." And it's not just mere record-sales envy that can take a toll. Dr. Drew explains, "The problem comes when the careers become a higher priority and take away from the time a relationship needs to succeed."



Dave and Carmen: "Are you sure love is a drug?"



ESTABLISH GROUND RULES

No matter how great your new (cough!) monogamous relationship may be, you'll inevitably crack on the road. Best to be honest and forthright about tour-bus infidelities, and your partner just might be forgiving.

"If [your] husband isn't getting a blow job when he's on tour in Canada and you're in bloody England, he's either gay or a mutant," insists Osbourne. "As long as he doesn't know her name, doesn't get her phone number and doesn't do it a second time, it's OK." We know what you're thinking . . . but unfortunately, Sharon's already taken.

As for the aforementioned Nick and Jessica, he got into hot water in October by getting frisky with a stripper at a friend's bachelor party. A trifling offense or grounds for dismissal? "Oh, Nick didn't cheat on her, he was just being an idiot," huffs E. Jean Carroll. "Every husband has a roving eye, no exceptions. Unless you're married to Stevie Wonder."

DON'T SAY YOU'RE SORRY WITH STOLEN FLOWERS

Nothing says "I'm horrendously guilty" like flowers, but if you must atone for some sort of debauchery-related infraction, don't be cheap about it. In the '80s, Ozzy Osbourne would regularly be kidnapped by Mötley Crüe for three-day God-knows-what binges, then stumble home bearing hastily acquired gifts. "Ozzy would stop off at a cemetery and pick flowers off someone's grave to give to me," remembers Osbourne. "Or he'd bring home kittens . . . live ones. But it never worked because I knew why he was giving me a gift, and I'd still go insane. We'd beat the shit out of each other, then we'd just get on with it."

DON'T BE IN A RELATIONSHIP AT ALL

"The first thing I would tell a rock star in the first stages of a relationship is, 'Don't try to have one,'" admits Dr. Drew. "Musicians tend to come from traumatic backgrounds and they're sexually compulsive." Navarro thinks that you need to get all the rock-star baggage out of your system first. "At the ripe old age of 37, the most decadent thing I could seek out was the white picket fence," he says. "Being in a stable relationship was the strangest thing I could do, the final frontier."

OUR EXPERTS



DAVE NAVARRO
played guitar for Jane's Addiction, married Carmen Electra and wrote the new book *Don't Try This at Home*.



SHARON OSBOURNE
married Ozzy Osbourne in 1982 and became internationally famous for it in 2002.



E. JEAN CARROLL
is the author of two self-help books, one journalism anthology and the advice column "Ask E. Jean."



DR. DREW PINSKY
is the chief of service at Las Encinas Hospital in Pasadena, California, and cohost of the radio show *Loveline*.

A close-up portrait of Snoop Dogg. He is wearing a thick, grey and white fur hood that covers his head and ears. He has a black headband under the hood and a goatee. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is holding a black stick with a duck head attached to the end. The duck head is light-colored with a black beak and is open, showing its teeth. He is wearing a white t-shirt and a ring on his finger.

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SITTING PRETTY

Greatest Songwriter of His Generation™ **Conor Oberst** is on a roll: He's toured with Bruce Springsteen and even topped the *Billboard* singles chart. So how is the Bright Eyes leader handling his new fast-lane life? "I'm more freaked out!" he tells *Blender*.

BY CHRIS NORRIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JELLE WAGENAAR



Conor Oberst
revels in "New Dylan"
accolades, awaits
arrival of refrigerator
repair man.

ON ANY GIVEN night, Tompkins Square Park is a bit creepy. But on this October evening, the old Manhattan stomping grounds for punks, protesters and a young Bob Dylan feels positively gothic. The sky is deep indigo, yellow leaves tumble across cobblestones and a streetlight illuminates a recent mural of Clash singer Joe Strummer. The murky shapes of yuppie dog walkers, collegiate hipsters and disoriented junkies drift by like ghosts — tracked by the huge, dark eyes of Conor Oberst.

"When I was a kid, I used to fantasize about death," says the 24-year-old singer-songwriter, shivering on a park bench as a full moon rises behind him. "Not that I was suicidal, but there was an attraction there. Mostly because I was depressed all the time." He has progressed somewhat since. "I went from, 'I don't care what happens' to 'everything is terrifying.'"

An androgynously skinny five-foot-nine, Oberst sits wrapped tightly in a navy windbreaker and a gray hooded sweatshirt on loan from *Blender* to shield him from the autumn chill. As he leans forward his dark, indie-goth hair hangs over his upper face, giving him the winsome, Damien-from-*The Omen* aspect that has magnetized so many from the stage. Not that Oberst is much for scary movies himself. "The last one I saw was *The Blair Witch Project*," he says, wrapping himself tighter. Regretfully, he must give the film a pan: "Too scary."

This kind of vulnerability has become something of a *métier* for Oberst. In the six records he has released as the leader of the emo-streaked, folk-rock collective Bright Eyes, the oft-tagged "boy genius" — who began his career at 13 — has bared his trembling soul with such a striking blend of witty confessional and finely turned lyricism that he now enjoys the status of "New Dylan," as the most critically lauded and obsessively followed young singer-songwriter in rock music.

Not that this buys much love in a dark Manhattan park. A dreadlocked guy emerges from the darkness to request money. "I don't know if I got any change, bro," Oberst says, digging in his pockets. The guy says he'll accept bills. Oberst gives him a buck. We decide to seek accommodations elsewhere.

★★★★★

THREE YEARS AGO, at 21, Conor Oberst suffered a kind of midlife crisis. A very close friend, his age, died and he himself came close, after drinking a magnum of whiskey that landed him in the hospital. "I had to quit drinking and doing anything for a while," he says, apparently out of the woods now, as he sips vodka and soda. "I realized how vulnerable I was, like the



Oberst: "Everybody must get stones!" and (right) definitely not canoodling with Winona Ryder. →

death could've happened to any of us. Then September 11 happened, then the war.

"Basically, my personal life changed and I was more freaked out. Then it seemed like the world was falling apart and I got more freaked out. So ever since then, I've been like . . ." He looks into the distance, as if searching for *le mot juste*.

Freaked out?

"Yeah" he says, and laughs.

Now in the warmth of an East Village bar, Oberst hardly gives off an air of doomy folk-bard misery. Having said hello to some hometown buds, he's kicking back at a table in the rear, Godfather-style, giving audience. His cell phone goes off, playing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy."

"I don't know why I put it on this ring, I fuckin' hate it," he says, pulling out his silver Verizon-issue cell. On the back, there's a sticker of a cartoon bear, holding a pitchfork, and a mouse, whose speech-balloon bears the telltale Dadaism of Japanese English: "Do you have corn?"

A Cornhusker State native, Oberst grew up in Omaha, with a dad who worked as an information manager of a bank, and a mom who served as an activist school principal. Just about everyone else — brother, neighbor and nearly all his friends — played in bands. "I got started so young because I was just tagging along with the older kids," says Oberst.

He began songwriting at 12, recording at 13 and, as a member of the band Commander Venus, signed a record deal at 15. As a result, his career suffered an awkward, Peter Brady-phase when Oberst hit puberty. "That second Commander Venus record is horribly hard for me to listen to," he says. "It's at that brutal point where my voice changed and I hadn't figured out how to use it again."

Having spent his later adolescence as a teen idol, Oberst now shrugs off most trappings of indie-rock it-boy posturing as just part of the gig. He's accustomed to stock press renderings of his looks. "They write 'doe-eyed' and 'floppy-haired,'" he says. "Always the flop." And he

downplays the tokens he receives from heaving-bosom, cardigan-clad fans. "I get all the normal things," he says of his fan mail. "Stuffed animals. Flowers. Panties."

But all this must be reaching some critical mass now, as Oberst enters a boho version of the fast lane. Since the release of Bright Eyes' breakthrough record, 2002's *Lifted or The Story Is In the Soil, Keep Your*

Ear to the Ground, Oberst has taken up residence in New York City, been linked in tabloids to alpha-groupie Winona Ryder, and, this fall, joined R.E.M., John Fogerty and Bruce Springsteen on the anti-Bush Vote For Change tour, leading Bright Eyes before crowds of 30,000 people.

"It was super-awesome," Oberst says. He got to act on his liberal politics and sing with "older bros" like Michael Stipe, Fogerty and Springsteen. "The first night, it was pretty clear we were nervous," he says of the kick-off in Philadelphia. "Bruce came to our dressing room right before we went on and was just like . . ." He nods, puts a comforting hand on my shoulder and does a convincing Boss rasp, "It's gon' be al-raah-t." He laughs. "It actually really helped."

Now, Oberst is simultaneously releasing two new Bright Eyes albums: the folksy *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning*, whose guests include country chanteuse Emmylou Harris, and the more electric *Digital Ash in a Digital Urn*, which features Oberst's friend Nick Zinner, guitarist of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Together, the albums make an imposing slab of breathless impressions and assured song craft from a troubadour on overdrive. *Wide Awake* opens with Oberst in folksinger mode, taking an audible sip of Jameson's and launching into a story of a plane-crash epiphany that kicks into a rousing, union-song-style call to arms: "In the ear of every anarchist that sleeps but doesn't dream/we must sing/we must sing/we must sing."

Oberst wrote most of *Wide Awake* after moving to New York a year ago. "It was exciting and intoxicating and a lot of these songs are a product of those first six months," he says. The *Billboard* chart-topping single "Lua" (Portuguese for *moon*) contains the album's most precise glimpses of a young scenester sucked into the whirl of New York decadence. "Julie knows a party at some actor's West Side loft," he sings to a companion who "looks skinny like a model" and keeps suspiciously disappearing to the bathroom. Sounds like indie-boy is taking a major bite from the Big Apple.

"Sometimes if I stay in New York too long, I get, like, reversed?" Oberst muses, having downshifted from liquor to Stella Artois. "I don't wake up 'til the sun goes down and I'm only awake at night. I mean, it's nice. But it kinda makes you crazy. 'Lua' is about that."

Noting the song's line, "We might die from medication but we sure kill all the pain," a new lyric about "side-effects they don't advertise," and a few more smoking guns, *Blender* asks if Oberst has dabbled much with . . . um, medications.

"Um. Yeah. I've taken . . . yes."

Is there a drug you won't ever do again?

"Acid," he says, without hesitation. But like many of his more harrowing trips to the wild side, this was long before stardom, back at his old janitor's job in Omaha. "It was hell, man," he says, shaking his head. "Mushrooms, Ecstasy — I'm not super-into that stuff, but they're all, like, tolerable. But acid is just . . . I mean, just complete paranoia and the idea that it's never gonna go away. That, like, broke my brain."

Happily, a casual observation of Oberst's lifestyle yields few signs of a broken brain. His digs, for one, betray neither cerebral disorder or abject decadence: a Spartan one-bedroom in a fifth-floor walk up he shares with his booking agent, it has a small kitchen counter with a pack of Parliaments on it next to the new Tom Waits CD. The clothes-strewn bedroom has a futon, a turntable, two guitars and a small amp on a flea-market Persian rug.

On the fridge, there are a tear-sheet magazine profile of "the girls," as Oberst calls the Saddle Creek-signed female duo Azure Ray; a snapshot of Cursive leader and longtime friend Tim Kasher holding a fifth of Jack Daniel's; and in the center, a photo from last year's Halloween show by an incognito supergroup that featured Oberst dressed as a skeleton, Nick Zinner as a vampire and NPR soft-pop temptress

Norah Jones as a foxy red devil.

Oberst obviously travels in a fast music crowd these days, but he hardly seems like a club-hopping glamster. In fact, his periodic romps behind the velvet rope sound spectacularly unslick. He ruefully recalls a fashion party last year, where, deeply "in his cups" as the Brits say, he bum-rushed an unattended Gwen Stefani.

"I'd never met her, but [No Doubt] had toured with [Saddle Creek band] the Faint and in my drunken state I felt like, 'Oh, I know her!'" he says. By the time Stefani's bodyguard had released the chokehold, Oberst says, "I was like, [in a kind of Muppet-Bobcat Goldthwait voice] 'You know the Faint! They mah frieeends!'"

Even Oberst's more notorious brush with female celebrity — tabloid photos of him kissing Winona Ryder — triggers amused exasperation. "That was, like, so ridiculous," he says. "I mean, of all the things I've done, that was like the most innocent." Bright Eyes' tour-manager, Bill Sullivan, who had managed ex-Ryder beau Dave Pirner's band Soul Asylum, made the introduction and Ryder became a fan, eventually throwing a shindig for the group in L.A. "That picture was literally us leaving, saying good-bye and thank-you. It just proves that in this [media] world, you're gonna be whatever people want you to be."

Oberst also laughs at some media portrayals of him as a purist champion of only bedroom mix-tapes and unsigned emo acts — the dour indie aesthete. "I like a lot of pop music," he says. "I like a lot of the

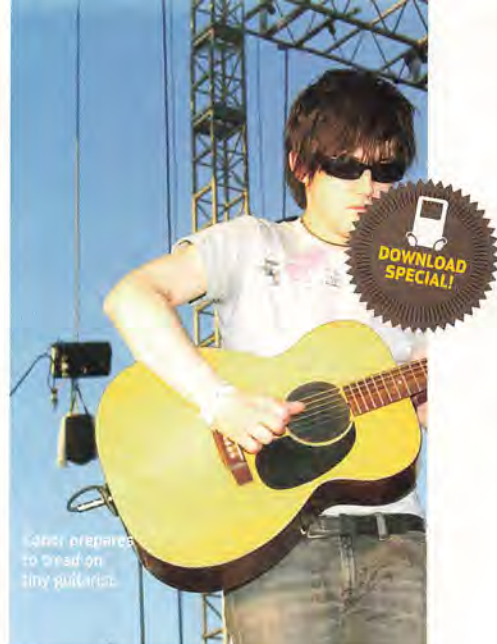
R&B girl groups that are kinda more . . . gangster? Destiny's Child, Missy Elliott and that girl that sings that song 'Dip it low, take it back slow . . . dah-dah,'" he says, singing the

chorus to a recent Christina Milan joint.

In fact, he estimates his musical intake to be about a quarter hip-hop, due to the influence of his rap-fiend roommate. "Around the house that's what gets played. At least when I'm not putting on Simon and Garfunkel."

With all the distortions that success, fame and rap music can bring, die-hard Oberst fans may fear for their young hero's immortal soul. They should probably rest assured. Even here in the polyglot metropolis, as he soaks up hip-hop, sociopolitical flux and various drinks, the Midwest troubadour retains some bedrock moral values.

"I mean, I can listen to a Justin Timberlake song and not cringe," he says. "But I do get bummed out when it comes to Ashlee Simpson." [BLENDER]



CONOR 101

From a mammoth 250-plus song catalogue, *Blender* selects five indispensable Oberst opuses.

1

"A PERFECT SONNET"

EVERY DAY AND EVERY NIGHT 1999

This lovelorn, self-reflexive screed pours from the 19-year-old bard (already a six-year confessional-rock vet) in a quavery rush.

2

"THE CALENDAR HUNG ITSELF"

FEVERS & MIRRORS 2000

On Oberst's bitterest breakup song, he demands to know if his ex's new boy is crazy in love. His best question: Does the guy wear her shoes to school like he did?

3

"LET'S NOT SHIT OURSELVES (TO LOVE AND BE LOVED)"

LIFTED OR THE STORY IS IN THE SOIL, KEEP YOUR EAR TO THE GROUND 2002

From his best — and breakthrough — album, this is rollicking country-rock about "cowboy presidents" and Oberst's haunting post-O.D. encounter with his weary father.

4

"ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER"

SADDLE CREEK 50 2003

Oberst's ghostly portrait of everyday life's weirdness during wartime is deeply impassioned. Especially when he describes hot sex with CNN in the background.

5

"EASY/LUCKY/FREE"

DIGITAL ASH IN A DIGITAL URN 2005

Sonically adventurous Oberst infuses dead-sexy electro with the tenderness of someone who falls in love too easily. And he somehow turns sampled screams into hooks.

NICK CATUCCI

"I'VE BECOME MUCH MORE CONFIDENT WITH MY BODY

Ex-Spice Girl **Emma Bunton** knows enough karate to kick the butt of anyone who asks impertinent questions about Justin Timberlake, temper tantrums and reunion concerts. But we asked 'em anyway.

BY NICK DUERDEN



By and large, the Spice Girls' solo careers have been pretty hopeless, haven't they? No, I wouldn't say that. We've all done our own thing, and after selling 40 million records as a group, that's all you can ask for. My new album, *Free Me*, has done very well in the U.K., quietly but on its own terms. I'm not Baby Spice anymore.

Glancing at your CD artwork, we noticed that, too. You've sexed up your image a bit, haven't you?

Well, I've become more confident with my body, definitely. I suppose I have been showing off my legs lately, but I only expose them when I'm in the mood.

Besides your newfound boldness, what else would people be surprised to learn about you?

I'm a green belt in karate, I'm quite good at tap dancing and I can say the alphabet backwards, which I think is really clever of me.

How do you think the Spice Girls changed the world?

You know what? I really think we have changed the world in some small way. Originally, we were told that a magazine would never sell if girls were put on the front cover. Well, we knocked down those barriers completely. We weren't the best

singers or dancers, but we conquered something together. We had tons of confidence that we passed down to countless other female singers.

What's the strangest gift you've ever received from a fan?

I get lots of T-shirts with my picture on the front and "I Love Emma" on the back. Knickers too — sometimes with people's faces on them. That's a little freaky. One guy sends me his pay slips. I'm not quite sure why . . .

What do women know that men don't?

Oh dear, that's a difficult one. Women are mad, though. We're barmy, but in a good way.

You used to date Justin Timberlake, didn't you?

I first met him years ago in London, when I was still in the Spice Girls and he was with 'N Sync. He invited me to a party and, . . . and we got on really well.

Emma Bunton:
"Yeah, I can definitely hear a train coming."

How well?

[Laughing] He's a lovely guy, completely adorable and a great performer — You're not getting any more out of me than that!

When was the last time you lost your temper?

Every morning, basically. I'm terrible in the morning. The Spice Girls never dared wake me up, because I'm a monster first thing. I can't talk until I've had a cup of tea.

What did the kids call you in grade school?

I had quite a round bum, so I was often called "Emma Bum Bum."

Blender took up a collection to get the Spice Girls reunited. Is \$675 enough to do it?

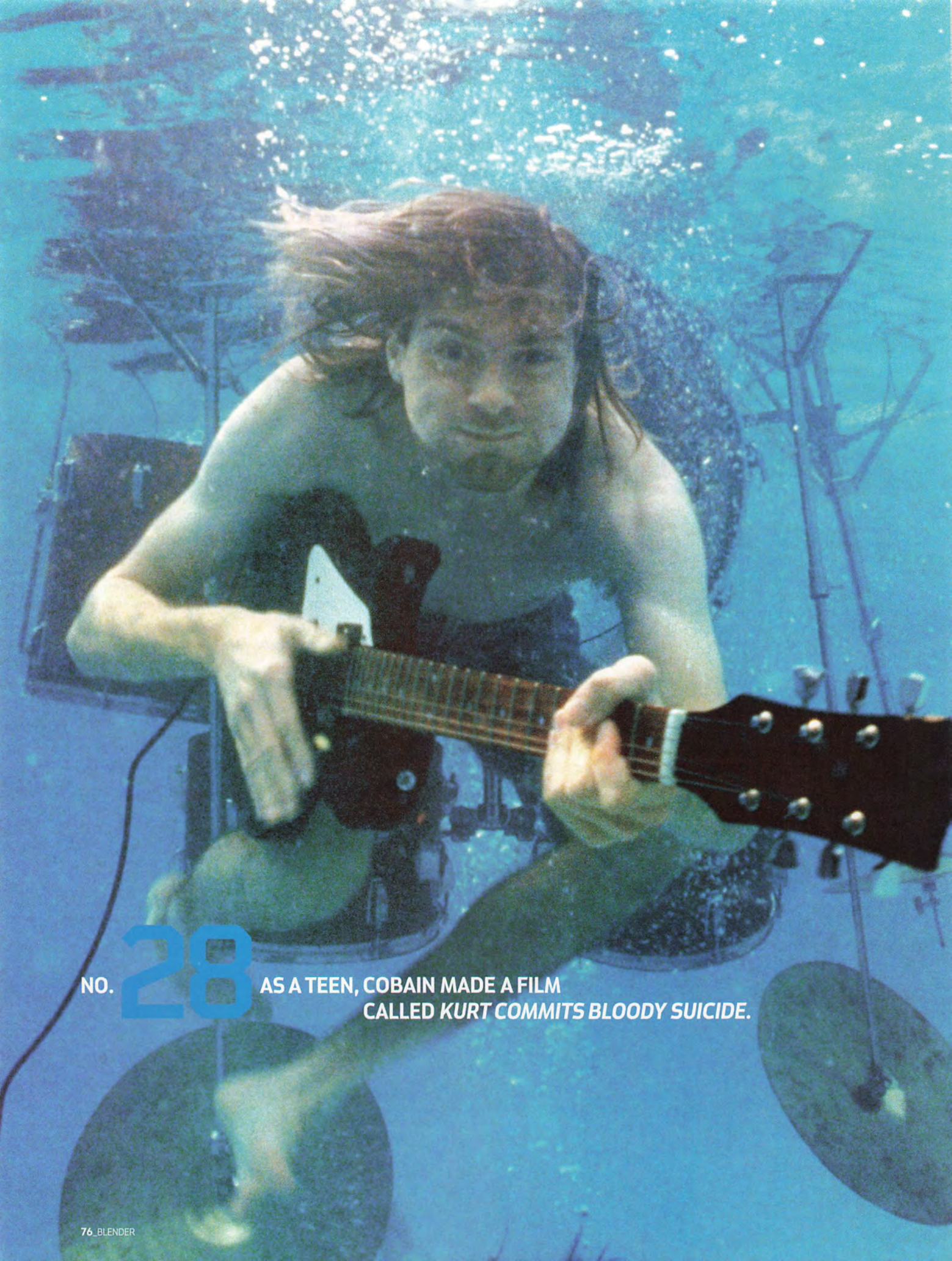
Absolutely not! But seriously, the Spice Girls was an amazing time. Sometimes I love the idea of getting back together, but then I think it would be hard because we've all moved on. Maybe at some point we will, but we'd expect much more than \$675.

How would you like to be remembered?

For my music and, if my acting ambitions come off in the next few years, for my acting. Hmm. For being a good performer and — well, why not? — for having such good legs!

EMMA'S NEW CD, *FREE ME* (UNIVERSAL), IS OUT NOW.





NO. **28**

AS A TEEN, COBAIN MADE A FILM
CALLED *KURT COMMITS BLOODY SUICIDE*.



33

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ...

TO CELEBRATE THE RELEASE OF THE NIRVANA BOX SET, *BLENDER* DIVES DEEP INTO THE GRUNGE ICONS' HISTORY FOR TALES OF DRUGS, GUNS, WORLD-CHANGING MUSIC — AND FAKE DOG POO!

BY MICHAEL ODELL

NIRVANA

1 KURT'S IMAGINARY FRIEND GOT DRAFTED TO VIETNAM.

Kurt Cobain was born on February 20, 1967. At age 2, he was living in Hoquiam, Washington, and had an imaginary friend, Boddah. Parents Wendy and Don Cobain were so concerned about their son's propensity for fantasy that, when an uncle was drafted to Vietnam, they told young Kurt that Boddah had been called up too.

2 YEARS BEFORE THEY MET, KURT AND COURTNEY DID THE SAME DRUGS.

In 1974, second grader Kurt was prescribed Ritalin to curb hyperactive behavior. Courtney Love was also given Ritalin and later reflected that this contributed to the couple's eventual heroin problems: "When you're a kid and you get this drug that makes you feel *that* feeling, where else are you going to turn when you're an adult?"

3 AT CHURCH, KURT FOUND GOD — AND KRIST NOVOSELIC.

On Wednesday nights, Kurt went to Christian Youth Group, where he befriended 19-year-old Krist Novoselic, whom he'd first met in high school. They started covering Led Zeppelin songs together. Kurt was baptized and, according to youth counselor Dave Reed, "accepted Jesus Christ into his life," but his religious fervor soon waned.

4 KURT SAVED PEOPLE'S LIVES. WHEN HE WASN'T MOPPING TOILETS.

In May 1985, Cobain started work as a janitor and — in the case of staff shortage — a substitute lifeguard at the local YMCA. One night that summer, he graffiti'd the YMCA building. Kurt didn't seem to realize that as janitor his first assignment the next day would be to clean it up.

5 HE NEARLY JOINED THE NAVY.

In 1984, Don Cobain asked a navy recruitment officer to speak to his son. Kurt listened but didn't follow up until a year later, when his friend Trevor Briggs enlisted. Kurt took the aptitude test and passed it, but pulled out at the last minute. →

6 BEING A COBAIN PET WAS HIGH RISK.

In 1981, Kurt killed a cat by trapping it inside his parents' chimney. Five years later he accidentally stepped on the head of his pet rat, Kitty, and was forced to beat it to death with a plank. In 1991, Kurt dyed his kitten, Quisp, red, white and blue with Kool Aid — then watched it have sex with his pet rabbit Stew.

7 A CHAINSAW HELPED FORM NIRVANA . . .

In 1986, Cobain formed the Sellouts, a Creedence Clearwater Revival tribute band. He played drums, Novoselic played guitar and pal Steve "Instant" Newman played bass. Newman quit when he lost his fingers in a gruesome logging accident. After recruiting drummer Aaron Burckhard and swapping instruments, the band evolved through names like Skid Row, Ted Ed Fred, Throat Oyster and finally Nirvana. Said Cobain, "I wanted to put out a record or play some shows instead of having it all fall apart like everything else for the past six years."

8 . . . AND SO DID SPRINGSTEEN.

Burckhard left the band in 1987 after he got busted for driving drunk in Kurt's car. He was pulled over by a cop named Springsteen and proceeded to abuse the cop with cries of "Hey Bruce! What's up Bruce!" The police impounded the car, and Kurt fired Burckhard from the drum stool.

9 AT FIRST, ONLY FURNITURE THOUGHT NIRVANA WERE COOL.

One of Nirvana's first shows was booked at Seattle's Central Tavern early in 1988. However, the attendance clocked in at an underwhelming zero. Cobain disappointed the expectant chairs and tables. "We loaded up our stuff and left," he recalled.

10 COBAIN PAINTED ON THE SIDE. AND JIZZED ON HIS WORK.

In 1989, Kurt's neighbor Amy Moon visited his apartment to commission a painting. Cobain told her that once a piece was finished he would add his "secret ingredient." "My seed is on this painting! Look, you can see how it glistens," he announced to her.



14

GIRLS' DEODORANT INSPIRED NIRVANA'S BREAKTHROUGH HIT.

In 1990, Kurt was dating Tobi Vail of riot grrrls Bikini Kill. Her roommate, singer Kathleen Hanna, taunted him by scrawling "Kurt Smells Like Teen Spirit" on his bedroom wall. Teen Spirit was the deodorant Vail used. Released in September 1991, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" turned the world on to something called grunge.

11 NIRVANA'S FIRST ALBUM WAS FINANCED BY ALASKAN FISH.

Recorded in 1989, *Bleach* cost \$605.17 to record — a figure far beyond Cobain's means. Kurt's friend Dylan Carlson introduced him to Jason Everman, who made good money as a fisherman in Alaska. Everman liked the band's sound and paid for the recording.

12 KURT SPENT HIS FIRST NIRVANA PAYCHECK ON GUNS AND VOMIT . . .

In 1990, Cobain received \$3,000 in a publishing deal. He spent nearly \$1,000 at the mall with friends Mikey Nelson and Joe Preston. Not content with a Nintendo system and BB guns, Cobain also loaded up on fake dog feces, vomit and severed limbs. "It was just a bunch of junk he could destroy," says Preston.

13 . . . THEN TRIED HEROIN.

In November 1990, Kurt first injected heroin. He had previously smoked pot, experimented with LSD and even inhaled fumes from aerosol cans. In the fall of 1991, though, Kurt's journals record an eerie decision: "I decided to use heroin on a daily basis because of an ongoing stomach ailment."



Kurt in seventh grade.

15 COURTNEY KEPT KURT'S GAYNESS IN CHECK.

"I'm definitely gay in spirit," Kurt told *The Advocate* in 1993. "If I hadn't found Courtney, I probably would have carried on a bisexual lifestyle."

16 THE BAND WERE OUTSIDERS, EVEN AT THEIR OWN PARTIES.

At Seattle's Re-bar for the *Nevermind* launch party on September 13, 1991, Novoselic threw dip at Kurt, who responded with a bowl of herb dressing. "We got thrown out of our own party!" Novoselic remembers.

17 KURT ONCE DUMPED A GIRL ON LIVE TV . . .

In 1991, Nirvana and Hole were on tour in the U.K. and Kurt's flirtation with Love was ongoing. But musician Mary Lou Lord believed she was his girlfriend. When Lord visited the U.K., Cobain couldn't bring himself to tell her in person. When Lord switched on Channel 4 to watch Nirvana perform, she heard Kurt announce, "I just want everyone in this room to know that Courtney Love, of the pop group Hole, is the best fuck in the world."

18 . . . BUT HE NEEDED TO LEARN A THING OR TWO ABOUT UNDERWEAR.

After Kurt and Courtney first had sex, at a Days Inn in Chicago, she told him to ditch his zebra-striped briefs and get boxers.

19 UNGRATEFUL KIDS MADE NEVERMIND NUMBER 1.

Until Christmas, *Nevermind* was a top 10 hit. In the week after Christmas, though, it finally reached number 1, toppling Michael Jackson's *Dangerous*. "We saw an incredible number of kids returning the CDs their parents had given them for Christmas and buying *Nevermind* in exchange," marveled a Tower Records exec.

20 KURT GRABBED ALL THE ROYALTIES.

Initially Kurt had been happy to split royalties equally with David Grohl and Novoselic. But *Nevermind* proved more successful than their wildest dreams, and Kurt had written the words and music. In 1992, he threatened to dissolve the band unless he got 100 percent of revenue from lyrics and a 75/25 split for music. Grohl and Novoselic agreed.

21 FEARFUL OF BECOMING AXL ROSE, KURT SKIMPED ON GROCERIES.

Stunned by his meteoric success, Cobain was keen to establish that he wasn't a decadent rock star like Rose, whom he despised. He stated that in the tax year 1992 to 1993 he earned \$1 million: \$380,000 went to taxes, \$300,000 to a new house and the rest to doctors and lawyers. This left \$80,000 for personal expenses, including food. "That's definitely not what Axl spends in a year," insisted Cobain.

22 THE NIRVANA BABY'S PENIS WAS BANNED IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

In April 1992, a city-code enforcement officer in Ventura, California, cited Spencer Elden's penis for violating the law. Elden was the 5-month-old baby immortalized on *Nevermind*'s cover. Staff at the city's Wild Planet record store were forced to cover his penis with pink Post-it notes.

COBAIN SPENT HIS FIRST PAYCHECK ON GUNS AND FAKE VOMIT

Courtney and Kurt in 1992.



23 A WAX STATUE OF COBAIN ONCE GOT BETTER VIP TREATMENT THAN THE REAL DEAL.

In August 1992, Cobain was strolling in London's Piccadilly area before playing the Reading Festival. Desperately needing to pee, he tried to enter the Rock 'N' Roll Wax Museum — but guards told him toilets were for "patrons only." The rejected Cobain was upset to see his own waxwork gazing at him from the window.



Cobain: "Mumpy-mumph-mumph!"

24 SID AND NANCY COMPARISONS WERE NOT LOST ON KURT AND COURTNEY.

Cobain used to check into hotels under the pseudonym Simon Ritchie, the real name of Sex Pistol Sid Vicious. Love's first acting role was as Nancy Spungen's friend in Alex Cox's 1986 movie *Sid and Nancy*.

25 KURT'S CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY COUNSELOR OD'D.

Drug rehab physician Rob Fremont had tried a radical and illegal detox method on Cobain. In 1993, Fremont was under investigation by the Medical Board of California for over-prescribing the drug buprenorphine to patients when he was found dead at his desk. Though the death was ruled a heart attack, his son Marc claimed it was a suicide by OD.

26 KURT SUGGESTED A DOUBLE SUICIDE THE DAY AFTER FRANCES WAS BORN.

On August 19, 1992, the day after his daughter was born, Cobain read a *Vanity Fair* article claiming that he and his wife had used heroin during the pregnancy. Agitated, he took a .38

into the maternity ward and suggested to Love they commit suicide. As a ploy to disarm him, Love took the gun, saying she would die first.

27 DUFF MCKAGAN TRIED TO SAVE KURT.

In April 1994, Guns N' Roses bassist McKagan found himself next to Cobain on a flight from L.A. to Seattle. Cobain had just absconded from the Exodus rehab facility in Marina Del Rey after just two days' treatment. "I knew from all my instincts something was wrong," remembered McKagan. He offered him a ride from the airport, but Cobain slipped away.

28 SUICIDAL TENDENCIES SEEMED TO RUN IN COBAIN'S BLOOD.

In 1979, his great-uncle Burle Cobain committed suicide with gunshots to the abdomen and head. His great-uncle Kenneth shot himself in the head in 1984. His great-grandfather James Irving stabbed himself, survived, but tore open the wounds in a psychiatric hospital and died. Aged 15, Kurt made a film called *Kurt Commits Bloody Suicide*.



"We don't need no stinkin' stylists." Nirvana in Paris, March, 1994

"He was the shape of suicide," remembered friend and original manager Ryan Aigner.

29 HE DIED LISTENING TO R.E.M.

On April 5, 1994, at his Seattle home, Kurt Cobain arranged his heroin stash, his rifle and some towels around him. He then played R.E.M.'s *Automatic for the People*. His body was found by electrician Gary Smith on Friday, April 8, dead of a shotgun blast to the head.

30 THE LAST NOTE HE WROTE WAS ADDRESSED TO BODDAH.

He wrote one suicide note for Courtney and Frances and another to his fans. The latter was addressed to Boddah, his imaginary childhood friend.

AFTER FRANCES WAS BORN, COBAIN TOOK A .38 INTO THE MATERNITY WARD

31 KURT WAS THE FOO FIGHTERS' DRUMMER. SORTA.

In January 1994, Grohl and Novoselic showed up to record in Seattle. Kurt skipped, so they recorded some of Grohl's ideas. When Kurt showed two days later, he played drums on these sketches. In 1995, Dave Grohl formed the Foo Fighters and re-recorded some of these ideas.

32 KRIST FOR PRESIDENT!

Novoselic has been politically active as a founding member of JAMPAC, an anticensorship group, and has stumped for electoral reform online. Combining memoir with politics, he published *Of Grunge and Government* earlier this year.

33 THE NIRVANA BOXED SET IS A "TREASURE CHEST."

The three-CD, one-DVD *With the Lights Out* marks the end of a three-year battle among Courtney Love, Dave Grohl and Novoselic over 68 previously unreleased tracks (81 tracks in all). "It's a treasure chest," says Grohl. "Few people expected it to see the light of day, even the guys playing it."



"I COULD BECOME THE OZZY OF THE AIRWAVES." **STEVE JONES**

THE CRUSTY OLD PUNK

WHO

SAVED RADIO

STEVE JONES WAS THE SEX PISTOLS' SELF-CONFESSED "DRUG ADDICT NUTCASE." BUT NOW THE GUITARIST-TURNED-DJ HAS A NEW VICE — MAKING RADIO GOOD AGAIN!

BY ADRIAN DEEVOY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHERYL NIELDS

STEVE JONES BELCHES melodically and then, for balance, cocks a buttock and breaks wind. While warm man-gas fills the small studio, he apologizes to his audience for his indiscretions. "God just made me this way, I guess," he says with a shrug. "Better out than in, as they say. Anyway, are we ready to go? Let's rock & roll. Here's some Status Quo. Take it away, sunshine . . ."

As introductions to radio shows go, it's irreverent and possibly a little unhygienic, but this is *Jonesy's Jukebox*, the jewel in Indie 103.1's crown, and for a couple of anarchic hours every weekday afternoon, anything goes.

Between noon and 2 P.M., a quarter of a million listeners in "L.A., Orange County and a bit of the Valley" (with an increasing legion joining online) are treated to the former Sex Pistol's exotic musical tastes, his endearing personal philosophy and the unhinged ramblings of a mind pulverized by punk-rock power chords.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IT'S NO SECRET that FM radio is currently plumbing new depths of gutlessness. Advertisers are dictating terms, top

talent is defecting to satellite radio and the music is a mere afterthought. Upstart Indie 103.1, which signed on over Christmas 2003, gleefully thumbs its nose at the stifling orthodoxies that have rendered commercial radio so lifeless through the years: Its progressive alt-rock playlist makes plenty of room for newbies like Tegan and Sara and for cult heroes like the Buzzcocks; and its DJs are allowed, even encouraged, to act, think and talk like real human beings. *Jonesy's Jukebox*, the emotional anchor of 103.1, comes as a welcome blast of fetid wind in the face of corporate conservatism.

"I can't stand all these DJs telling me everything is great every two minutes," says Jones, 49. "I know everything isn't great. And they're terrified of dead air. Me, I love it." He leaves a lengthy pause to illustrate his point. "See? Lovely that, wasn't it? Radio needs to breathe a bit, like a guitar solo."

Jones speaks in a clotted London accent, wholly unmodified by his 22 years of living in L.A. This and his quaint use of Cockney slang make for an unusually soothing and engaging radio voice.

His producer, Mark Sovel, who doubles as the station's music director, bemusedly looks on as, on-air, Jones discusses "birds" (women), "gingers" (homosexuals: ginger beer = queer) and obscure side streets in his birthplace, Shepherd's Bush, West London. →

"It's true I don't always know exactly what Steve is talking about," Sovel acknowledges. "But sometimes I think it's better that way."

Blender suspects that the producer may be right: As Jones cues up his next tune — having just played 12-year-old Ricky Wilde's chipper '70s novelty "I Wanna Go to a Disco" and glam-rock nobody Brett Smiley's "Va Va Va Voom" — he wonders whether or not the show suffers from "nonce syndrome" (a predilection for underage boys).

Sovel's role in the studio is to ensure Jones maintains a steady flow of music and chat. He must also prevent the presenter from swearing — not an easy feat, as Jones proved during the Sex Pistols' legendary teatime slot on London's *Today* TV show in December 1976, when the 21-year-old guitarist sensationally called host Bill Grundy a "fucking rotter."

In recent weeks — *Jonesy's Jukebox* has been running for nine months — Jones has insisted on telling the listeners that he and Sovel are lovers, addressing him as "my honey." The producer tolerates this good-natured abuse simply "because the show is so good."

The playlist, which Jones physically lays out in a grid before him, is a daily revelation. Dependably there will be a healthy dose of vintage Brit punk and some solid slabs of '70s junk shop glam, but after that, all bets are off. "The only things I won't play," he muses, "are Led Zeppelin and any of them nü-metal boy bands."

He does, however, play obscure old English comedians, aspiring local bands, '50s crooners, '60s teen idols, '80s goths, prewar music-hall acts, weird friends of Morrissey, skinhead reggae and hair metal. The list is as eccentric as it is eclectic.

This extraordinary stew is peppered with sound bites from

Jones's favorite movies and his own surreal interjections: "That song just makes me wanna hold my breasts"; "all politicians are tossers, even Paris Hilton"; and, alarmingly, "Mmm, sing to me, Mummy."

Regular items include "Whistling for Winners" (the DJ puckers up and performs a song that listeners must recognize for a prize) and "Fun with a Face on Friday," where Jones dips into his impressive black book and invites a celeb chum onto the show. Guests have included Brian Wilson, Nancy Sinatra, Courtney Love and actor Gary Oldman. "But I don't

"And this one's for all you truckers."

MY WAY!

JONESY'S JUKEBOX

A one-hour sample of the best show on the radio

OCTOBER 27, 2004

SIOUXSIE & THE BANSHEES "SPELLBOUND"

THE SAINTS "(I'M) STRANDED"

RAMONES "I DON'T WANNA GROW UP"

THE CREATION "MAKING TIME"

REZILLOS "TOP OF THE POPS"

RADIO STARS "DIRTY PICTURES"

NEW YORK DOLLS "PILLS"

THE RUNAWAYS "AMERICAN NIGHTS"

SPACEHOG "CRUEL TO BE KIND"

THE STROKES "WHAT EVER HAPPENED?"

S'COOL GIRLS "ROCK 'N' ROLL DISCOTEK"

SPARKS "NEVER TURN YOUR BACK ON MOTHER EARTH"

FACES "THREE BUTTON HAND ME DOWN"

interview them as such," Jones insists. "We just have a chat. I'm much more interested in what they had for lunch than the inspiration behind their latest masterpiece."

Michael Steele, the station's program director, took a gamble and offered Jones (DJ-ing experience: none) a job in February. "I was totally won over by his enthusiasm," says Steele.

"And he was an absolute natural. The listenership has built steadily from day one."

While the station labors in the shadow of long-standing

alt-rock powerhouse KROQ, business is in good shape. The advertising for Indie 103.1 is sold by Clear Channel, the San Antonio-based radio conglomerate.

But Clear Channel has no say in the programming: That is done by the multimedia company Entravision, which is financed by Spanish language TV and radio stations. Besides Jones, Henry Rollins presents an authoritative weekly show, *Harmony in My Head*, as do Dave Navarro's side project Camp Freddy.

Steele credits the station's success to "speaking to people like human beings and playing music that you'd buy your-

self." The feeling is of belonging to a club whose unofficial president is Steve Jones.

Jonesy's Jukebox has become, Steele says, "appointment radio." "People make a particular point of tuning in," he explains. "Like they did with *Friends*. Whether Steve's telling you about his colonic exploratory or the problems he's had with a girl, there's this ongoing saga that's kind of unmissable. The listeners feel part of his life, and when they call in you can hear the love."

As if to back up Steele's theory, a loyal listener calls that afternoon.

"All you posers out there think you're changing the face of music," he says. "But this guy actually did it."

This much is true. Jones's sonic onslaughts and cheeky, Joe Sixpack demeanor changed the sound, stance and sneer of just about every aspiring guitar-slinger this side of 1977. Without Jones, Green Day would have stayed in their bedrooms and Slash would wear his Les Paul like a ukulele.

Soft-middled, bespectacled and wearing loose-fit jeans more for comfort than fashion statement, Jones is a much cuddlier proposition these days than the spiky rebel-brat of yesteryear. Only the self-designed "Anarchy" T-shirt suggests anything other than a nodding acquaintance with punk.

"This is the first real job I've ever had," he announces proudly. "First time I've ever really had to turn up on time and do my bit. And, do you know what? I fucking love it."

He is talking over lunch in the unlikely environs of a vegetarian restaurant in West Hollywood. "The grub's good here," he says. "But look at all the yoga birds that come in. Beautiful."

It would be fair to say that Jones has an eye for the ladies. Clean and sober for 14 years and off cigarettes for almost three, women are his last vice. "That and food," he sighs. "And now they're telling me I've got to cut the fucking carbs out."

Listeners to his show will be familiar with his deceptively offhand delivery, which can divert without warning into deeply personal territory. He will break off from lusting after a "gorgeous bubblebutt" to recall that "my stepdad was a cunt. And I don't speak to my mum."

Jones's life has never been altogether happy. Even though his musical résumé reads impressively enough (sessions with Iggy Pop, Bob Dylan, Johnny Depp and Johnny Thunders plus the many "super-groups" he has joined in the past 25 years: the Greedy Bastards, the Professionals, Chequered Past, Neurotic Outsiders), he acknowledges that his peak came during the 18 months when the Sex

HIS PLAYLIST — PUNK, GLAM, CROONERS, WIERDOS — IS A

DAILY REVELATION.



Jones (far right) on the Pistols' first, and last, U.S. tour.

PUNK MEMORIES

MY LIFE AS A SEX PISTOL

Steve Jones on his favorite day in his favorite band

Pistols ruled the world.

"I wish we'd made more albums though," he says, shunting aside his tofu. "Only really done one, didn't we? If we'd made a few more, like the Clash did, there'd be a lot more dough coming in now."

The various Pistols reunions have helped him keep a house in Beverly Hills, and relations with his band mates are cordial enough — he remains closest to drummer Paul Cook — not to discount future performances, although "playing the same fucking 12 songs can be a drag."

Outside the restaurant, Jones bumps into an actress he knows. "Nice legs," he says, winking. "What time do they open?" He gives her his number on the condition that she enter it into her phone under "Steve Jones: Rock & Roll God."

IN THE radio station's compact control room the following day, Elvis Costello strides in full of bonhomie and praise for Jones's show. "It's fantastic," he bellows. "You just play whatever you want." He raves about a song Jones played earlier. "That was a band called Spoon," Jones says with no little pride. "Good, isn't it? Here, I'm going to play this one for you, son. It's called 'Dodgy Lookin' Bird,' by Mike Sarne."

"The best day for me was the day after the Bill Grundy show [in December 1976] when we became a household name. It was amazing what just saying a few words could actually do. I woke up in Denmark Street in London, opened the door, and there were five paparazzi guys taking my picture."

"Cookie [Paul Cook, Pistols drummer] was with me that day and we walked 'round to the Glitterbest [management] office on Oxford Street and people were just staring at us. Malcolm [McLaren] shit himself. He was trying to make out it was all great, but he was terrified."

"I went out and got drunk that night."

Capitalized on the fame, got drunk, got laid. And it wasn't just the fat, crap, ugly punk birds anymore. Suddenly regular birds wanted to shag you and all."



Entering into the relaxed spirit of the show, Costello sings two songs from his new CD, *The Delivery Man*, live into the studio mic and then, at Jones's request, a blistering rendition of "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love and Understanding?"

"That was brilliant," Jones says, eyeing Costello's guitar as Elvis hits the final chord. "Gave me the shivers, that did. Thanks ever so much, mate. Ooh. Lovely. Anyway, this is 'Welcome Home' by Peters and Lee..." And with that he cues up a string-drenched, 30-year-old ballad by a blind man and his blond wife. "Such an obvious segue!" laughs Costello, slapping his own forehead. "Why didn't I think of that? Genius!"

Jones winds up by moaning about the wet weather, speculating over what to eat tonight and telling a strange story about pounding a streetlight in London when he was 11. "Good one, today," he says, easing his car up into the Hollywood Hills. "Be great if it really took off, wouldn't it? I could become the Ozzy of the airwaves. Millions of people tuning in to hear the innermost workings of a nutcase drug addict from Shepherd's Bush. I'd buy a massive place in Malibu and all." He slows down, the better to observe a strolling L.A. lovely.

"And imagine the birds," he moans. "Just imagine the birds." [BLENDER]

Even Mariah Carey averts her eyes when *Glitter* is on TV.



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AND JON BON JOVI MUSIC BY KEANU REEVES WRITTEN BY JOE ESZTERHAS BASED ON AN IDEA BY SOME COKEHEAD

PRODUCED BY A GUY WHO WILL NEVER SEE HIS MONEY AGAIN DIRECTED BY THE SEVENTEENTH PERSON WE ASKED

WORDS BY MIKE ALBO, CLARK COLLIS, ANDREW HARRISON, STEVE KANDELL, BEN MITCHELL, JAMES SLAUGHTER AND JONAH WEINER





25 DR. DRE

WASHOUT

DAY JOB: Medically unqualified hip-hop overlord

BUT ON SCREEN: "I can't believe this niggal!" Snoop Dogg says of costar Dre at one point in *The Wash*, the Dr.'s first and last starring role. The audience can't help but agree. Apparently choosing at random what facial expression to wear, his character — a car wash manager — greets good news with a dour scowl and bad with the maniacal grin of a methed-up lottery winner.

WORST MOMENT: *The Wash* (50th min.): To convey his lust for a foxy car wash client, Dre flashes the pained expression of someone trying to evacuate an open umbrella from his colon.

24

STING

KING OF PAIN, POMPOUSNESS

DAY JOB: Environmentally concerned former Police-man

BUT ON SCREEN: Visibly smug. In films as disparate as *Quadrophenia* and *Plenty*, you can actually see Sting thinking what a brilliant actor he is — even as he delivers lines in which punctuation has slipped its moorings ("Who is this. Traitor?" in *Dune*) and pulls facial expressions last seen during the silent era.

WORST MOMENT: *Dune* (89th min.): He runs the gamut of his skills ("All I can. See is an Atreides that I. Want. To kill." etc.) while wearing nothing but a pair of blue plastic underpants.

STING'S WORST MOMENT? THE PLASTIC UNDIES SCENE IN *DUNE*.



23 FLEA

PIP-SQUEAK PUNK

DAY JOB: Pug-faced Chili Peppers' bass dynamo

BUT ON SCREEN: The human Red Bull employs his spazzy speed-freak-in-a-home-for-the-criminally-insane acting skills for myriad films — including 1983's *Suburbia* and as a Shakespeare-spouting Portland hustler in *My Own Private Idaho*. And, in perhaps his finest role, the voice of the feral, barely bathroom-trained wild child Donnie on the *Wild Thornberrys*.

WORST MOMENT: *The Big Lebowski* (103rd min.): Wearing a WWII German helmet, he's beaten up by John Goodman and crawls across the asphalt with his pants down.



22 PRINCE

SMALL BLUNDER

DAY JOB: Pocket-sized pop genius

BUT ON SCREEN: The loosely autobiographical *Purple Rain* (1984) was a hit, but as gigolo romance *Under the Cherry Moon* (1986) demonstrated, decent tunes could only cover so much of Prince's unconvincing mumbling, a point driven home by the silly *Purple Rain* sequel *Graffiti Bridge* (1990).

WORST MOMENT: *Purple Rain* (52nd min.): Prince's girlfriend walks out after he slaps her for joining a rival band. Prince looks at the floor and blinks a lot.

WILL ACT BADLY 4 U



21 OZZY OSBOURNE

CRACKED ACTOR

DAY JOB: Grizzled dark lord of metal

BUT ON SCREEN: Ozzy knows his limitations, avoiding jobs that require memorizing a lot of dialogue — or anything much at all. Aside from the creatively "ironic" casting that sees him play a straight-laced evangelist in 1986's schlock-horror farrago *Trick or Treat*, he's largely stuck to appearing in substandard comedies as "Himself" — in a visual shorthand for pantomime evil.

WORST MOMENT: *Trick or Treat* (40th min.): A befuddled Ozzy fluffs his lines while quoting a lyric he finds particularly distasteful: "Gonna guide my long steel missile down on your love channel."



20 RUN-DMC

IT'S TRICKY . . . TO READ A LINE

DAY JOB: From Hollis, Queens, hip-hop's pioneering superstars

BUT ON SCREEN: Even the Fat Boys upstage them in 1985's *Krush Groove*. Joseph "Run" Simmons's idea of an ad-lib is saying "um" a lot. Meanwhile, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels has a hard time looking awake, much less reciting his boilerplate lines. And they're thoroughly unconvincing in *Tougher Than Leather*, a 1988 crime thriller thick with dead air.

WORST MOMENT: *Tougher Than Leather* (5th min.): Jason "Jam Master Jay" Mizell recites a boring, overlong monologue about getting a blow job . . . in a nightmare.

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Can you spot "Hooker Spice"?



19 THE SPICE GIRLS

WOEFUL WANNA-BES

DAY JOB: Progenitors of overtly sexual teen pop

BUT ON SCREEN: In 1998's *Spiceworld*, Scary, Posh, Baby, Ginger and Sporty lob clunker lines with zero comic timing and have spontaneous pillow fights while riding around in a huge Union Jack-painted bus driven by

Meat Loaf. Along the way, they meet alien fans in latex costumes and all the while try hard to seem oblivious to their waning fame.

WORST MOMENT: *Spiceworld* (55th min.): On a speedboat spinning around the mucky Thames, the girls sing a charmless cover of "My Boy Lollipop."

★ 25 WORST ROCK-STAR ACTORS



18 JA RULE

THUG LITE

DAY JOB: Gravel-voiced MC and duet expert

BUT ON SCREEN: Apparently afraid of squandering more street cred, Rule tacks the word "man" onto his every line in the 2002 Steven Seagal action vehicle *Half Past Dead*. His permanent blank scowl is the most memorable thing about his *Fast and the Furious* cameo, but, incurably stiff, he's inadvertently fine playing a Secret Service agent in 2003's *Scary Movie 3*.

WORST MOMENT: *Half Past Dead* (8th min.): Rule gives Seagal a lesson in ebonics, teaching him how to say "aaight."



17 MICK JAGGER

LEATHERFACE!

DAY JOB: Priapic leader of the greatest rock & roll band in the world

BUT ON SCREEN: Having successfully played himself in his debut, 1970's *Performance*, Jagger has played himself ever since, regardless of whether the script stipulates Australian outlaw (*Ned Kelly*), futuristic bounty hunter (*Freejack*) or concentration camp transvestite (*Bent*).

WORST MOMENT: *Freejack* (44th min.): Taunts fugitive time-traveler Emilio Estevez during a car chase — "I hate to tell you this, but you're speeding! Ha ha ha ha ha ha!" — in a way that could only be less terrifying if delivered by a sock puppet.



16 BEANIE SIGEL

GANGSTA HACK

DAY JOB: Mumbly, gun-toting rapper and convicted felon

BUT ON SCREEN: Same

WORST MOMENT: *State Property* (42nd min.): In an unholy cross between Knute Rockne's "Win one for the Gipper" pep talk and De Niro's baseball bat scene from *The Untouchables*, the paunchy Beanie — playing a gangster unimaginatively named Beans — semicoherently preaches loyalty to his crew. He then rewards his soon-to-be-violently-murdered underlings with ice and hookers.



15 ROGER DALTREY

WE WON'T BE FOOLED AGAIN

DAY JOB: Dorian Gray–like lead singer of the Who

BUT ON SCREEN: Made an appropriately glassy-eyed screen debut as a deaf, dumb and blind kid in *Tommy* in 1975. He's gradually added "mugging" and "shouting" and "looking like a formaldehyde-preserved drag queen" to his thespian repertoire.

WORST MOMENT: *Vampirella* (30th min.): Daltrey sports a horrendous mullet and fangs as Vlad, an evil vampire from outer space. As he and the titular Vampirella are captured by vampire hunters, Vlad backhands her and sneers, "You set me up, you bitch!"



14 JAMES TAYLOR

NEVER TRUST A HIPPIE

DAY JOB: Sensitive, heroin-loving, soft-rock troubadour

BUT ON SCREEN: In 1971's *Two-Lane Blacktop*, his first and last feature film role, the fantastically inert Taylor inexplicably muffs the few lines that the script allows him and spends the bulk of his screen time staring blankly from behind the wheel of a souped-up '55 Chevy.

WORST MOMENT: *Two-Lane Blacktop* (32nd min.): In a semi-lucid attempt to woo a comely hitchhiker, Sweet Baby James mumbles his way through a mercifully short speech about cicadas.



13 MICHAEL HUTCHENCE

AUSTRALIAN FOR "CAN'T ACT"

DAY JOB: Late INXS frontman and Australian moptop

BUT ON SCREEN: As the star of 1987's *Dogs in Space*, Hutchence slithers around the floor of the huge dirtbag house he shares with 40-odd other post-punk fools in Melbourne's '80s bohemian scene. When he isn't growling or making pouty faces, Hutchence sings in a band and lovingly caresses his own filthy hair — just like in real life!

WORST MOMENT: *Dogs in Space* (48th min.): Hutchence creepily play-acts his future druggie-sex ways as he injects his girlfriend with heroin using a leopard-print tie.



Ringo regrets second acid tab in *Caveman*.

12

RINGO STARR

HELP!

DAY JOB: British pop drummer

BUT ON SCREEN: Compared to George Harrison, Ringo may have been "the funny one." But compared to anyone else who ever staggered across a movie set, he was hammy and awkward. Despite an absurd range of roles — from the titular *Caveman* to the Pope in

Lisztomania — he remains the cinematic equivalent of that embarrassing uncle who tells the same joke every Thanksgiving.

WORST MOMENT: *Sextette* (54th min.): Ringo is less believable as a boorish film director than his octogenarian costar Mae West is as a vampy sex symbol.



11 PETER FRAMPTON

BARELY COMES ALIVE

DAY JOB: Talking-guitar-wielding '70s rock idol

BUT ON SCREEN: Cast at the height of his mega-fame in the lead role of a small-town, rock-star hero in 1978's ludicrous and almost entirely dialogue-free, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Frampton was forced to fall back on his powers of mime. Unfortunately, he didn't have any.

WORST MOMENT: *Sgt. Pepper's* . . . (23rd min.): In a scene designed to illustrate the depravities of the record industry, Frampton is slipped a mickey and hallucinates an orgy involving costars the Bee Gees.

Justin Timberlake in *Edison*



FUTURE THESPIANS

ROCK ACTORS: THE NEXT GENERATION

Will Justin and Jessica trump Madonna and Mick? Hell, they couldn't be any worse . . .

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

THE PICTURE: The \$25-million indie thriller *Edison* sees Timberlake playing an aspiring journalist who teams up with jaded hack Morgan Freeman and DA's investigator Kevin Spacey to tackle a group of corrupt cops. **THE BIGGER PICTURE:** Available footage apparently reveals Timberlake to be hopelessly wooden.

JESSICA SIMPSON

THE PICTURE: The winsome Newlywed plays Daisy Duke in the remake of the hit 1979–85 TV show *The Dukes of Hazzard* alongside Johnny Knoxville and Seann William Scott as redneck cousins Bo and Luke. **THE BIGGER PICTURE:** She is reportedly concentrating on the basics for the part. "I'm trying to get my butt perky," she told MTV News.

GWEN STEFANI

THE PICTURE: In Scorsese's Howard-Hughes biopic *The Aviator*, Gwen appears as the platinum starlet the pre-OCD Hughes plucked from obscurity. **THE BIGGER PICTURE:** Don't expect the second coming of Meryl Streep. Stefani herself admits the role is "like, one line or something."

50 CENT

THE PICTURE: *Locked and Loaded* features him as a drug dealer who quits crime for rhyme. **THE BIGGER PICTURE:** The decision to play a rapper, and not, say, Benjamin Franklin is obviously a good one. As is the choice of a *Sopranos* writer to pen the screenplay.



10 MASTER P

LESS THAN MASTERFUL

DAY JOB: Multimillionaire Dirty South nabob, Lil' Romeo's papa

BUT ON SCREEN: Look — you don't need to be Pacino to know you should *open your mouth* while acting. But Percy Miller mumbles non-stop in 1998's *I Got the Hook Up*, riding a bored, monotone drawl. It's a comedy, but his timing is as on as a five-dollar Rolex. He fares even worse as director of the constipated crime drama *Hot Boyz*.

WORST MOMENT: *I Got the Hook Up* (19th min.): In a culturally sensitive "English" accent, P attempts to order a cheeseburger at a Japanese restaurant.



9 GENE SIMMONS

ALL TONGUE, NO TEETH

DAY JOB: Kiss bassist and self-proclaimed god of thunder

BUT ON SCREEN: Simmons says making movies is like having teeth pulled — which, coincidentally, is also what it's like watching him act. Cast as the supposedly menacing heavy in such woeful mid-'80s actioners as *Runaway* and *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, the bassist's barely audible mumbling and sad narcoleptic demeanor make him seem about as lethal as a discarded teddy bear.

WORST MOMENT: *Wanted: Dead or Alive* (5th min.): While cutting the throat of a Hasidic Jew, Simmons looks in danger of falling into a mid-slash coma.



8 NEIL DIAMOND

OY VEY!

DAY JOB: Bouffant-haired god of '70s soft-rock

BUT ON SCREEN: Starring in a baffling remake of *The Jazz Singer* as a Jewish cantor living a secret life as a crooner, Diamond is either hilariously wooden or simply numb from the shock of watching costar Laurence Olivier's berserk performance as his Orthodox father.

WORST MOMENT: *The Jazz Singer* (81st min.): In the studio, Diamond throws the least convincing rock-star tantrum in history. "Come on man! What happened to the groove? Don't tell me to cool it, man!" etc.

7

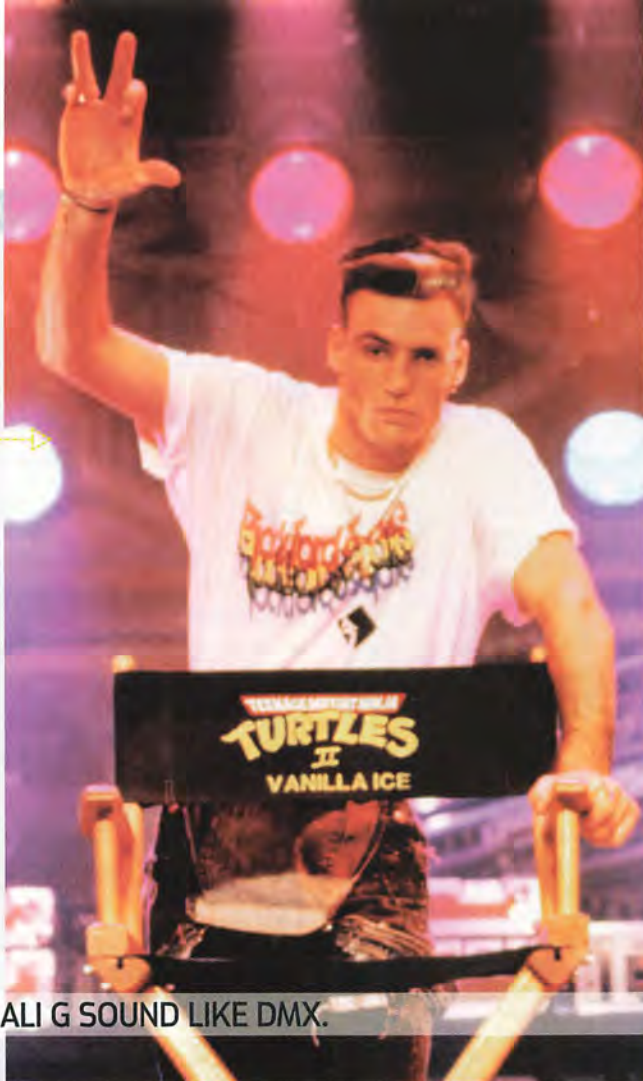
VANILLA ICE

HOLLYWOOD HONKY

DAY JOB: Former whiteboy rap icon
BUT ON SCREEN: In 1991, most rappers were seen as the scourges of suburbia; Vanilla Ice wasn't one of them. Which makes his film vehicle *Cool as Ice* so thoroughly absurd — a walking wigger parody, his right eyebrow is botoxed into a permanent arch, and his ebonics make Ali G sound like DMX. By 2002's *The New Guy*, he was downgraded to cameo status as an angry record store clerk with a rattail goatee.

WORST MOMENT: *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II* (69th min.): Ice does the running man and raps "go ninja, go ninja, go!"

ICE'S EBONICS MAKE ALI G SOUND LIKE DMX.



6

BRITNEY SPEARS

BLANK-STARE BOMBSHELL

DAY JOB: Semiretired Mrs. Kevin Federline

BUT ON SCREEN: All-American gal in search of a dream and the mom she never knew, in *Crossroads* (2002). Has three facial expressions: head on side spaniel-style (sad), nose wrinkled ("We're rockin'!") and I, Robot blankness (default).

WORST MOMENT: *Crossroads* (59th min.): Britney catches up with the mommy who left her when she was three, only to be rejected again. Years of rigorous Mouseketeer stage training are discredited as confusion judders across Spears's vacant countenance like a poorly fitted garage door.



5

ELVIS PRESLEY

INVENTED ROCK; REDEFINED SCHLOCK

DAY JOB: King of rock & roll

BUT ON SCREEN: Early promise in *Jailhouse Rock* and *King Creole* decimated by 27 abominable '60s films. In particular *Tickle Me*, *Easy Come, Easy Go* and *Harum Scarum* seem to have been written and directed by people who actively hated him. To his credit, Presley appears visibly ashamed of himself throughout.

WORST MOMENT: *Charro!* (2nd min.): The point, immediately following the title song in Elvis's lone noncrooning role, when we realize that for the next 90 minutes there will be no other musical interlude to divert us from this strained melodrama.



4

JON BON JOVI

GIVES ACTING A BAD NAME

DAY JOB: Hair-metal Renaissance man

BUT ON SCREEN: Jon has made the most of his rugged good looks and ripped physique. As such, he is the uncomplicated beefcake of choice when the likes of Jason Patric are unavailable, too expensive or just not interested.

WORST MOMENT: *The Leading Man* (36th min.): Planning to seduce a playwright's wife, Bon Jovi discovers a dildo hidden in her underwear drawer while doing his research. Jon gamely tries to express "knowing," "sad" and "smug" but manages only "confused."



3

MARIAH CAREY

ALL THAT GLITTERS . . .

DAY JOB: The melodramatically trilling queen of Long Island

BUT ON SCREEN: Neither her appearance as an opera star in *The Bachelor* or as a zonky homeowner on MTV *Cribs* prepared the public for *Glitter*, the semiautobiographical masterpiece of bloated pop-diva vanity. The movie bombed, the soundtrack tanked and Carey snapped, handing out Popsicles on TRL before retreating from the public for a rest-cure.

WORST MOMENT: *Glitter* (36th min): After their first date, Carey, in bed with her sweaty boyfriend, says, "I just have a little bit of a tough time trusting people."



2

BOB DYLAN

YOU DON'T NEED A WEATHERMAN TO KNOW . . . HE BLOWS

DAY JOB: Voice of a generation

BUT ON SCREEN: Dylan is mesmerizing playing an enigmatic rock star in real life. But when playing a rock star in a work of fiction where his character should resemble an actual human being, his gnomish persona and constipated-looking visage are disastrous. Remarkably, he's now proven this twice — in 1987's *Hearts of Fire* and 2003's Bob-scripted *Masked and Anonymous*.

WORST MOMENT: *Masked and Anonymous* (25th min.): When Giovanni Ribisi is shot dead right in front of him, Bob lets his moustache do the emoting.



1

MADONNA

MAMA DON'T ACT

DAY JOB: The most famous woman on Earth

BUT ON SCREEN: Invariably cast as an irresistible femme fatale — Breathless Mahoney in *Dick Tracy*, Susan in *Desperately Seeking Susan* — yet cannot “do” sexy. Instead, she adopts the glassy-eyed expression of someone on a cocktail of prescription drugs and delivers her lines as if reading aloud from the letters of a stalker.

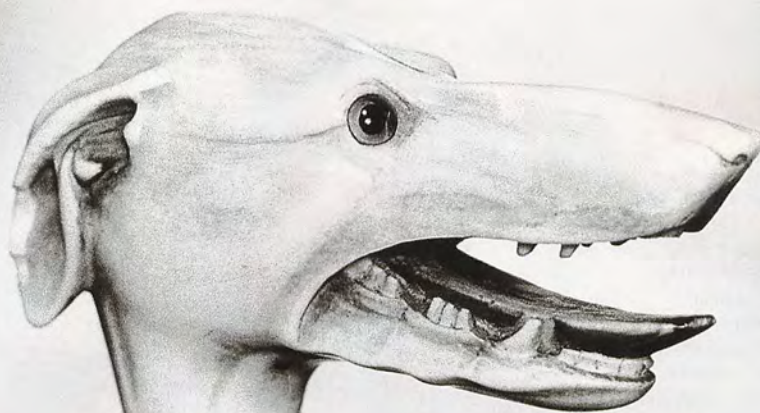
WORST MOMENT: *Body of Evidence* (13th min.): “Have you ever seen animals make love, Frank?” she asks a baffled-looking Willem Dafoe, sounding less like a seductress and more like your 7th-grade biology teacher.

WORST
ROCK ACTOR
EVER!

INVARIABLY CAST AS A FEMME FATALE, MADONNA CANNOT “DO” SEXY.

Movie star, Pee Wee Football coach, bigger-than-ever hip-hop icon, **Snoop Dogg** has left his thugsta days far behind. But, as *Blender* discoverizzles, you still don't want to make him angry.

BY ROB TANNENBAUM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHERYL NIELDS



H DOGG T



Snoop Dogg:
"Right, then
I'm off to the
North Pole."



Snoop Dogg is mad.

The Rowland Heights Raiders are defending their 7-0 record on a sunny Saturday afternoon in late October, but midway through the game, they're ahead by only a touchdown. And they're not really paying attention, which happens sometimes with 10-year-olds.

Standing on the grass of a high-school football field, in a multicultural suburb an hour east of Los Angeles, assistant coach Snoop Dogg is wearing black slippers, a football jersey and a silver hat. Before the game, he roamed the stands, bookended by security guards the size of NFL linebackers, signing autographs and posing for photos. Snoop leaves movie sets to attend football practice, even plans video shoots so they don't conflict with games, and he insists that these kids show focus and concentration. He wants them to be players, not players.

At six-foot-four, he's two heads taller than many of the Raiders as he gives a halftime pep talk. "Y'all not playing right," he snaps, his usually relaxed voice rising tensely. Challenging them, encouraging them, instructing them, he's like a hip-hop Vince Lombardi, except that Lombardi probably never ended a halftime address by saying, "Now get yourselves some oranges or something."

The Raiders are quarterbacked by Snoop's son, Spanky, who already wears a size-eight shoe: He has braided hair like his dad, is tall like his dad, has long eyelashes like his dad, a calm demeanor like his dad and a huge diamond earring like his dad. In the second half, Spanky leads the Raiders to four touchdowns and the team wins easily. As a surprise, Coach

Snoop gives each excited Raider a three-wheel WFFF extreme bicycle. And on the sideline, he leads the team in a victory cheer: "Pimp, pimp, hooray! Pimp, pimp, hooray! Pimp, pimp, hooray!"

In addition to coaching Pee Wee Football, Snoop Dogg, 33, is a rapper, a film actor and the host of a TV show (*Doggy Fizzle Televizzle*, formerly on MTV) and a home video (*Girls Gone Wild: Doggy Style*). No matter the setting though, he portrays the same central quality: "laid-back," as he drawled calmly on "Gin and Juice," his 1994 hit song. If an icicle could rhyme, it would sound like Snoop. "I'm a cool cat," Snoop says during the three days *Blender* spends with him in California and New York, which raises the question: What kind of dog acts more like a cat?

Where other rappers bark threats, he purrs warnings with a feline dispassion. "1-8-7 on an undercover cop," he cooed on "Deep Cover," the Dr. Dre-produced song that began Snoop's career in 1992 — though he sounded so stoned, the talk of murder seemed more like a hazy daydream. In the blazing, tricky, odd new hit "Drop It Like It's Hot," the first single off his album *R&G (Rhythm and Gangsta): The Masterpiece*, he talks about dodging cops and honoring Crips. Like Ice Cube's scowl and Eminem's smirk, Snoop's shrug is a trademark. But after 13 years,

he comes across like an amusing TV character whose wicked past is now just an endearing quirk, not so much a pimp as an imp.

"Everybody likes to get down with Snoop Dogg," Snoop says about himself. "They like my voice, my tone, my style. I try to give people something to smile about, something to dance to. If it's TV, records, radio, whatever, it's always a full-on great time with Snoop Dogg." If pop music is a sitcom, Snoop is Uncle Gangsta, a charming rogue with a smile on his face and a blunt in his hand.

"That's the thing about Snoop. He's not walking around saying he's a killer," notes Pharrell Williams of the Neptunes, who produced "Drop It Like It's Hot." "He's trying to have a good time: He smokes his weed, he drinks his wine, he hangs with his chicks, he's not looking for any trouble. And if it's gotta happen, it's gotta happen."

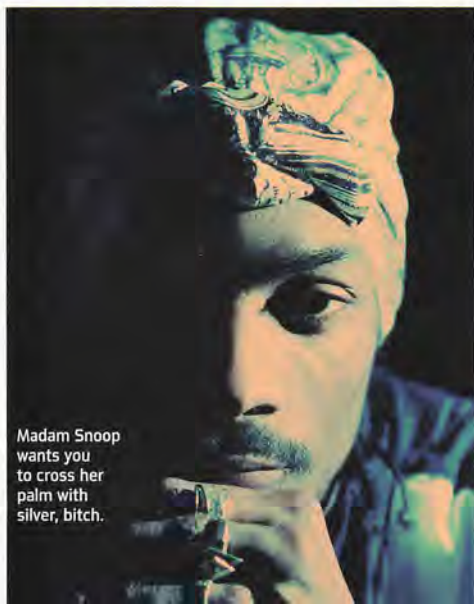
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SNOOP DOGG IS dead.

He turned down a role in *The Longest Yard*, a big-budget Hollywood remake starring Adam Sandler, to be in *The Tenants*, a low-budget indie about two troubled men (Snoop and Dylan McDermott) in the early 1970s who live in the same tenement and become friends and rivals. The film is shooting in a decrepit warren of rooms at the Ambassador Hotel in L.A., where Robert Kennedy was assassinated, a huge building that's said to be haunted. A producer on *The Tenants* swears he saw a ghost crossing the ramshackle lobby.

DOGG DAYS

THE HIGH LIFE AND TIMES OF THE AMBASSADOR OF GANGSTA . . .



Madam Snoop wants you to cross her palm with silver, bitch.

1971

Calvin Broadus is born in Long Beach, California, on October 20. His mother nicknames him "Snoopy," citing his resemblance to the *Peanuts* pup.



1990

At 18 years old, the recent high school graduate and card-carrying Crip is convicted for slinging crack-cocaine, a felony. He gets a year in the slammer.

1991

Recently freed, Snoop and pal Warren G record demos in a shed. A copy winds up in the hands of G's half-brother Dr. Dre, who promptly enlists Snoop as his sidekick.



1992

Dre launches his solo career with the chilling theme song to *Deep Cover*, sharing the mic with his 20-year-old protégé. The track wins Snoop a 50 Cent-style street buzz.

1992

The Chronic, Dre's simmering gangsta-funk LP, becomes a massive crossover success, dropping featured MC Snoop into mainstream America's lap.



Two Latino kids are writing graffiti in the hallways to give the set a more authentic tenement look. "What smells bad?" McDermott coughs, an oversized pair of plastic eyeglasses exaggerating his sad eyes. In this morning's climactic scene, there's some violence with a hatchet and a .38. "It's like you're getting punched in the stomach," a special-effects guy counsels Snoop between takes. "But with an axe."

Snoop is covered in blood, motionless on the floor. Is he thinking about death, summoning these pian emotions of fear and dread? No, he's napping. Call it the cool-as-a-catnap.

His biggest film roles have been in the comedies *Starsky & Hutch* and *Soul Plane*, a farce about an all-black airline, which Spike Lee denounced as "coonery and buffoonery."

"When he does *Starsky & Hutch* or *Soul Plane*, it's just Snoop being Snoop," observes *Tenants* director Danny Green, a handsome 32-year-old in a leather jacket. In *The Tenants*, Snoop is disguised by an Afro wig, a goatee and gold teeth. "People are gonna be surprised by what he does in this movie," McDermott says. "He's not the pimp in this movie."

LL Cool J had originally planned to costar with McDermott, who suggested Snoop after LL had to back out. Green agreed to cast Snoop as an ex-convict who's writing a history of the black power movement. Snoop's presence onscreen, says Green, "is about menace. His eyes



"'Cause it's 1-8-7 on a cover 2 zone," Coach Dogg at 2004 "Snoop Classic," Downey, CA.



◀ "Pimp cup? No, honey, it's a loving cup . . ." With wife Shante in 2001.

say to you, this is not a guy you want to fuck with. It's like, he's charismatic, he's cool, but if you fuck with him, things could go bad really quickly." Let's take this as foreshadowing.

Snoop's camp says he made *Soul Plane* mostly as a favor to the director and now wants to establish himself as a more serious actor. "I just didn't have the roles to show you how real I could get," Snoop says, sitting in his trailer and holding a twiggy-looking blunt. "I had roles where it seemed like I wasn't serious, 'cause those roles were so natural. Now I wanna play roles that are unexpected, like Denzel in *The Manchurian Candidate*, roles they wrote for a white guy." He pauses. "You

got a lighter?"

As a tape of his son's game plays on the TV, Snoop lights up. He does not pass the blunt, much to the relief of *Blender*. He's due back on the set in 15 minutes. Will the director use special effects to hide the red in Snoop's eyes?

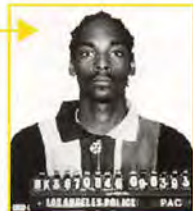
"I don't want to, man," Green shrugs later. "If he works better in a certain state, why would I fuck with it?"

During one scene, the two lead characters get high together, and though the actors used herbal cigarettes, McDermott was nervous. "I was concerned that he was gonna break out his stash, because then the day would be shot. I don't think I can handle his load," he confesses.

Two years ago, Snoop declared that he'd given up his beloved indo so that he could "better myself" and "see things clearer." It was as though Pam Anderson had given up cleavage. When *Blender* →

1993

In August, Snoop is charged in the killing of immigrant Philip Woldemariam. Snoop will be acquitted in 1996, but for now, the arrest only fuels his hype.



1993

Doggystyle becomes the first debut album in history to enter the charts at number 1. It will go on to sell nearly five million copies.



1997

With gangsta rap on the wane, Snoop finds a new way to seduce suburban white kids, touring with Tool and Korn on the Lollapalooza tour.

1998

Splitting acrimoniously from Death Row (Suge Knight will later make veiled death threats against him), Snoop signs with talent-cemetery No Limit and puts out three underwhelming albums.



2001

With sales dwindling, Snoop reinvents himself as pop icon, following up his 1999 autobiography, *Tha Doggfather*, by hosting a best-selling *Hustler*-produced porno, *Doggystyle*.



2002

Asksnoop.com launches the Shizzolator, a handy resource for converting websites into Snoop-speak.

2003

Teams with MTV for *Doggie Fizzle Televizzle*, a half-hour of whitey-baiting sketches and musical guests — like *Chappelle's Show* — only canceled.



2004

Snoop reminds us that he's still pretty good at making music, recording one of the finest singles of his career, "Drop It Like It's Hot," with the Neptunes.

asks why he's smoking again, Snoop gets annoyed. It's a surprising reaction since he's written more weed songs than the Grateful Dead and even made a cameo as a pothead in Dave Chappelle's stoner comedy, *Half-Baked*.

"I don't like talking about weed. That shouldn't be the focus. It's my choice to stop and go back when I want to. But the issue is, is his music good, is he in some great movies? How you do it, Snoop Dogg? How you stay looking so fly after so many years?"

Maybe it's the weed that keeps him looking so fly. But behind the red in his eyes, *Blender* can glimpse the menace Danny Green recognizes. "Just by seeing his face, you know what he's been through, you know all his personal history," Green says.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CALVIN CORDOZAR BROADUS was born in Long Beach, California, a suburb 25 miles south of downtown L.A., and raised by his mother, Beverly Broadus, who gave him the nickname "Snoopy" for his long, canine face. His father, Vernell Varnado, a postal worker, wasn't around (though that doesn't stop Dad from selling old Snoop posters and \$15 "Poppa Snoop" T-shirts online). "My mother did it on her own," Snoop explains. "My mom was meaner than a motherfucker to me. The fear people have for a father, I had for my mother. Still do."

He was attending Lafayette Elementary in Long Beach, an undistinguished city school, when he got accepted into Cleveland Elementary, "one of those schools for the gifted. I went for a year and a half, then I got kicked out for showing my little weenie to some girl," he says with a rueful laugh. "That was it. Back to the 'hood schools."

He grew up hearing '70s R&B — Johnnie Taylor, the O'Jays, the Dramatics, Bobby Womack — and just as he left elementary school, the earliest rap songs hit the West Coast. Snoop began rapping "about shoes and cars and all this stupid shit I didn't have." He modeled himself on the basketball cool of Magic Johnson and the autobiographical tales of rebel comedian Richard Pryor ("He just didn't give a fuck. He said what he wanted, whenever, wherever"), hung around with the Crips, the gang that dominated Long Beach, and continued to get suspended from school for "cussing, fighting, ditching, everything."



Being acquitted of murder, 1996.



"... And from now on, Kenny Rogers is off the playlist." Snoop at age 15.



Performing at BET Awards, 2003.



In *Soul Plane*, 2004.

He was earning \$80 a week at a job and saw that friends were making 20 times as much selling drugs, so he did, too. After an arrest for cocaine, he went to jail for a year, which he told *Blender* last year "was great."

When he got out, he started to rap more seriously, and his best friend, Warren G, introduced him to his half-brother,

IF POP MUSIC IS A SITCOM, SNOOP IS UNCLE GANGSTA.

Dr. Dre, the canny producer of N.W.A.'s *Straight Outta Compton*, the landmark West Coast rap album.

Snoop didn't sound like anyone else. Both his parents came from Mississippi, and his casual cadence was a menacing twist on deep South hospitality. "I just haven't lived there to get the full Southern drawl. But it's in me," Snoop says.

His first song, "Deep Cover," was a hit. Dre's no fool; when he made his 1992 solo album, *The Chronic*, he elevated Snoop to costar, and together, the two spread gangsta rap into every high school

and mall. With its references to G's, blunts and bitches, its death threats, bloody morality and I-gotta-get-mine mantra, *The Chronic* is the dictionary of gangsta. "We took that gang-bang violence in us and projected that violence into music instead," Snoop explained a few years ago.

Their music was evil, insinuating and wildly popular. Snoop and Dre seemed inseparable, Lennon and McCartney in a low rider. "Snoop is going to be the biggest thing to black people since the straightening comb," Dre declared. Dre's label, Death Row Records, was overseen by Suge Knight, an imposing former football player who, it's alleged, once hung Vanilla Ice upside down from a hotel terrace to extract a percentage of the rapper's publishing money.

While Dre was producing Snoop's first solo album, Snoop and his bodyguard were charged with murder in the shooting of an Ethiopian immigrant who, cops charged, had scrapped with one of Snoop's friends. When *Doggystyle* came out three months after the indictment, the added publicity helped make it the first rap record to debut at number 1. (In 1996, Snoop and the bodyguard were acquitted of the murder charge.)

Then it fell apart. Dre believed Knight was cheating him, and left the label. Snoop made another album, *Tha Doggfather*, without Dre, who dissed his former partner with a bored sniff: "There's really



nothing that was said on there that hasn't been said 50 times before."

One Christmas, Knight gave Snoop a \$12,000 diamond ring. But Snoop also began to feel that Knight was keeping more of the money than he deserved, and in 1998, while Knight was in jail for a parole violation, the rapper left Death Row for Master P.'s No Limit Records. Knight reacted by denouncing Snoop as an "imposter" and a "fake." These days, Snoop carefully avoids saying anything public about Knight.

Crip philosophy puts a higher value on male friendships than on female relationships. Snoop, who'd grown up without a father, had found two strong, smart mentors, Dre and Knight, and both were gone from his life. As his career expanded into other fields, his music wandered into repetition; instead of sounding cool, he often sounded bored.

Some rap fans think that redundancy disqualifies him as a great MC. "He's a talented MC," argues Pharrell Williams. "But he's more than just an MC, because he knows what he wants to look like, he understands what his videos should be. He's a great entertainer."

His star power is evident on *R&G* in guest spots by Pharrell, Nelly, Lil Jon, 50 Cent and Justin Timberlake. It's Snoop's best and most consistent record since *Doggystyle*, and it offers the secondary pleasure of hearing Timberlake croon, "Don't fuck with me," like a white boy in a dark alley. Snoop even sings on a few songs. "There are a lot of songs the ladies are gonna love. I wanted to show my women fans that they're special to me," he says, which must explain lines like "a nigga wanna hump you" and "You got to put that bitch in her place/Even if you're slapping her in her face."

As an MC, Snoop has consistently been an emissary between black and white cultures. Consider his popularization of "izzle" talk: "fo' shizzle my nizzle." As Snoop says, the device first appeared publicly on the 1981 rap hit "Double Dutch Bus," by Frankie Smith. But Snoop spread it outside the ghetto. "It finally reached the white community, and they havin' fun with it. But the black community is through with it, and we don't know what to do with it.

"That's what I'm tripping off. Motherfuckers waiting on me to come up with something, when I don't even sit around and wait for me to come up with something. Tell 'em to give me Webster's Dictionary money and I'll put some lingo slingo together."

There are some things Snoop won't do for money, including a film role where "I was a pimp, and I was pimping some

fags. I was like, 'Pimping fags? You gonna have the gay community mad at me. I don't get down like that.' I had to pass on that project."

But for Snoop, many topics lead immediately to the question of payout. He won't bring *Doggy Fizzle Televizzle* back to MTV, he says, because they didn't bring a wheelbarrow. "I gotta get the big Dave Chappelle \$30-million deal. I set the pace, and then somebody else gets the big deal. Damn, why Dogg didn't get the deal when he was doing this shit first?"

"I used to be the ambitious little puppy — you could put anything in my bowl, and I'd eat it. Now I'm like, fuck that. I don't eat dog food, I eat steaks. And I like chips with my steaks. Not potato chips — money."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SNOOP DOGG IS angry again.

At 3 A.M., he took a private charter flight from Los Angeles to New York, where he'll be a surprise guest at Jay-Z's Madison Square Garden concert. He's in his hotel suite a few hours before the

show, "tired as a motherfucker," he says, sitting next to wife Shante and getting his hair braided. There are Armani shopping bags on the table, and his suite smells like a dime bag.

When *Blender* asks about his murder trial, which Snoop once said "helped me develop as a man," his voice turns to daggers. "As far as you bringing it up, that's rather fucked up, considering this is so far behind me. I really don't let people ask me questions like that," he says, with a glare that suggests we can suck his diznick.

To paraphrase Danny Green, things have gone bad really quickly. We apologize for making him angry. "I'm not angry," he replies, in a tone that sure sounds angry. "If I was, you'd be out of this motherfucking room right now."

Snoop would prefer that the interview focus on the "older, wiser, more mature Snoop Dogg": father of three, football coach, porn host — oops, let's skip that last one. Since the murder trial, he's learned to "take better steps. A life was lost. I can't fix it, I can't change it, I can just try to better myself and do things to prevent that from happening again."

Tonight, Snoop's appearance comes three hours into Jay-Z's gala concert. It's only three nights since R. Kelly walked off-stage at Madison Square Garden, claiming he saw a gun in the audience, and ending his tour with Jay-Z. The rapper has filled R.'s slot with some two dozen R&B and hip-hop friends, including Mary J. Blige, P. Diddy and Fabolous.

A few performers, including Jay and Busta Rhymes, make fun of the absent Kelly. Snoop doesn't mention Kelly; too relaxed and confident to salute the crowd, he doesn't talk at all. He just steps onstage, cloaked in a dark hoodie, to the wildest applause of any guest. Here, in a rap enclave where antiheroes are heroes and careers last as long as a loaf of bread.

The show ends close to midnight, and when the all-star collection of rappers take their bows and walk off, they do it to the tune of "Drop It Like It's Hot." It's a salute to Snoop — for having the hottest song in the land, for being the rare rapper to sustain a hot career across a dozen years, for voyaging from the ghetto into the mainstream, then coming back home. [BLENDER]



Snoop and Dr. Dre, 1993.

"SET THE DATE!"

Snoop and Dr. Dre reunited — by *Blender*!

THE GREATEST RAP duo of all time began when Dr. Dre made Snoop a star on 1992's smash *The Chronic* and produced Snoop's debut, *Doggystyle*. But they haven't worked together in years — through no fault of Snoop's. "I don't know why," Snoop told *Blender*. "You have to talk to Dre. I'd love to be back in the studio with him. We don't hate each other, we love each other."

"About a year and a half ago, I said to him, 'Let's make a record called *Break Up to Make Up*, just me and you on the whole album, no guest rappers.' And he didn't want to do it. We need to hurry up and do it while people are still interested. I'm with it. What's up, Dre? Where you at?"

When *Blender* reached Dr. Dre, he laughed and replied, "Fuck it. Let's do it. Set the date." Don't forget to thank us in the liner notes, guys. And can we get an executive producer credit?

ROB TANNENBAUM

GUEST LIST

COMPETITIONS, EVENTS AND OTHER FUN STUFF
WE THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT



Sum 41 performs for a packed house in New York's Rothko

BLENDER SESSIONS WITH SUM 41

➤ ON OCTOBER 11, *Blender* and Absolut hosted a "wild and intense" Blender Sessions in New York City featuring punk-pop quartet Sum 41. Guests rocked out to the band's new album, *Chuck* while sipping cocktails infused with Absolut's latest Raspberri flavor.



JAMAICA MON!

★ ON SEPTEMBER 18, *Blender* and Bloomingdale's got irie in the men's department at the Palm Beach Gardens, Miami, Aventura, Orlando and Boca Raton locations with great giveaways, tasty treats and reggae beats. Congrats to Lourdes Rodriguez of Miami who won an all-expense paid trip to Jamaica care of Air Jamaica and Couples Resorts.



bloomingdales airjamaica couplesresorts

"A WHITEBOY SINGING SOUL MUSIC"

★ Broussard's high octane take-off uses no formula at all. Instead he offers a blend of abilities, styles and enthusiasms uniquely adapted to himself on his debut album, *Carencro*. But that's deceptive because his music draws from everything he's absorbed. "I feel like I've melded a bunch of things together that people haven't focused on for a long time." In his songs can be heard influences and accents ranging from soul men like Stevie Wonder to Louisiana icons like Johnny Allan and G.G. Shin to road warriors like Dave Matthews. Marc is ALWAYS on tour. Check out at marcbroussard.com for dates!!!



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IN STORES NOW!

Vanessa Carlton poised to surpass the platinum triumph of *Be Not Nobody*.

VANESSA CARLTON'S HARMONIUM



★ *HARMONIUM* featuring the hit single 'White Houses' is the new album from extraordinarily talented and Grammy nominated Vanessa Carlton, a follow-up to her multiplatinum album *Be Not Nobody*.



100 EMINEM

Michael Jackson's least favorite MC is back to lose himself again — and he's still mad at Kim. ★★★★★



118 NIRVANA

Delayed by fights, feuds and lawsuits, the Nirvana CD/DVD box set holds lots of surprises. ★★★★★



120 THE BEATLES

Forty years after the long-haired dawn of Beatlemania, their first four U.S. albums are finally on CD. ★★★★★

THE GUIDE

THEY MAKE 'EM. WE REVIEW 'EM



GWEN STEFANI

The first solo album from No Doubt's prom queen is an '80s dance-party picnic. p112

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Reporting

Marshall Mathers returns with his most silly, schizoid set yet

for Doody

EMINEM ENCORE

★★★★

SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE

SINCE 1999, RAP'S tightest whitey has waged a fierce rhyme battle against the only opponents on Earth that are skilled enough to take him: the voices in his head. He calls two of the most prominent ones Eminem and Slim Shady, but it doesn't stop with them. There are also Stan, Rabbit and the needle-voiced mariachi from Dr2's "My Band" who makes one hell of a salsa. For Marshall Mathers, rap is therapeutic theater; a place to wrestle with mischievous impulses and lifelong traumas — including, but not limited to, those caused by Debbie, his neglectful-mother-turned-litigant and Kim, his off-and-on-girlfriend-turned-wife-turned-ex-wife-turned-murder-fantasy.

Mathers has long toyed with the idea of identity crisis. For him, "Lose yourself in the music" isn't just an inspirational "Eye of the Tiger" slogan. To paraphrase his 2000 hit "The Way I Am," when he rhymes, Mathers is whoever he says he is. That's true more than ever on his fourth album, as he culture-munches his way through a cast that includes R. Kelly, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Christopher Reeve (who tells us, via droning talk-box, "See you in hell, fuckers"), a listener sick of Em's whining and a Southern yokel pontificating on homosexuality.

You can trace Eminem's shape-shifting back to his wonder years in Detroit, explored here on "Yellow Brick Road." Black kids jumped him and moneyed whites shunned him, marooning him somewhere in between with a fractured sense of identity. "How can I be white? I don't even exist," he rapped in 1999. Here, that existential dilemma becomes a delirious expression of freedom: If he's no one, then he can be *anyone*. While 2000's

Marshall Mathers LP and 2002's *Eminem Show* were frequently solemn, rage-torn affairs, with *Encore*, Eminem rediscovers his sense of play and lets it run naked and screaming across the stage.

Why? Well, for starters, he's bored. "What else could I possibly do to make noise?" he asks on the plinky dance-pop single "Just Lose It," which sounds goofier than anything he's ever recorded. "I done touched on everything *but* little boys." Em knows the first rule of controversy: Once people come to expect shock from you, it's hard to get even Lynne Cheney worked up by your provocations. He opens the Dr. Dre-produced "Rain Man" on a familiar note, rapping "I find you offensive for finding me offensive" — but he's done the censorship thing to death, so he lapses into dizzying wordplay, spits nonsense and sings about how he's got no legs. Throughout *Encore*, psychobabble edges out psychodrama. At one point, he actually rhymes "Yoo-Hoo" with "dippity-ga-ga-boo-boo."

Eminem has clearly been hanging out with an 8-year-old kid named Hailie. How else to explain the flood of bathroom noises, riffs on nursery rhymes and repeated use of the words *weenie*, *puke* and *pee-pee*? For some men, fatherhood means a newfound sense of maturity. For Eminem, it means finding your inner child and giving him a wedge.

But Eminem isn't all Captain Underpants here. On "Ass Like That," a sitar-laced, pedophile-obsessed booty ode, he adopts Triumph the Insult Comic Dog's Russian cackle, rolling every *r*: "Do not treat me like a murderer, I just like to pee/Pee, pee, yes, I make R&B!" It's a goofy moment, but a richly layered one, too — Eminem pretending to be comic Robert Smigel pretending to be Triumph pretending to be R. Kelly — and it ingeniously dramatizes Em's longtime obsession with artistic responsibility. If some guy can don

EMINEM LETS HIS SENSE OF PLAY RUN NAKED AND SCREAMING

Eminem: "I knew I shouldn't have told that Amtrak conductor to suck a dick."

a plastic pooch and get away with obscene, politically incorrect rants, Mathers asks, why can't I speak through my own puppets without getting blamed for the downfall of Western culture?

On "Mosh," a lurching Bush-bash that makes Bruce Springsteen look like Toby Keith, levity disappears altogether. The Heart-sampling "Crazy in Love" bitterly retreads Eminem's love/hate relationship with Kim, while "Like Toy Soldiers" cleverly taps Martika's teary 1989 breakup anthem for a rebuff against *The Source* magazine (which attempted to label him a racist last year). These moments offer depth or drama, downplaying Eminem's acrobatic flow and Google-fast wit. Irony is



a rare gift in hip-hop, so it's to Em's credit that he knows when to deep-six his.

Encore takes a sharp nosedive into rote ho'-hate ("Spend Some Time") and gun-talk ("One Shot 2 Shot") towards the end, but these songs are skippably minor. The real story here is of a man losing himself and having a hell of a time at it. As the Pee-Wee-sampling "Just Lose It" suggests, this is *Em's Playhouse*: Chairy has 'shrooms stuck in her cushions, the King of Cartoons screens Jenna Jameson flicks and the secret word is always *fart*.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Rain Man," "Ass Like That," "Never Enough"

THE FOUR BEST EMINEM SONGS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD

"THE LAST HIT" FEATURING MR. EON

PRIORITY, 1999

Anyone mesmerized by *8 Mile*'s battles needs this tag-team fireworks display, featuring indie goofball Eon. Shouting out cavewomen, acid and — duh — locking his wife in a trunk, Em is at his scatterbrained braggiest.

"WATCH DEES" FEATURING THIRSTIN HOWL III

RAWKUS, 1999

Paired with a Ralph Lauren-obsessed NYC weirdo, Em matches the moaning horror-core beats here with dazzlingly intricate rhymes about dismemberment and lice.

"MONKEY SEE, MONKEY DO"

NO LABEL, 2003

"You pussies think I went soft since *8 Mile*! When I come back I'll be shooting more than just paintballs!" Leaked online during his and 50 Cent's Murder Inc. feud, Em snarls over a body-slam backbeat and burning techno bassline.

"LEAN BACK" (REMIX) FEATURING LIL JON, MA\$E AND FAT JOE

NO LABEL, 2004

Mix-tape-only version of Terror Squad's number 1 ode to gangstas too tough — or fat — to dance. Em steals the spotlight, riding an undulating string of syllables.

JONAH WEINER

THE SCORE >>

★★★★★

EXCELLENT. A MUST-HAVE

★★★★

GREAT. CHECK IT OUT

★★★

GOOD

★★

JUST OK

★

WEAK

CAPLETON

REIGN OF FIRE ★★★

VP

Jamaican singer's spiritual reggae is not for the pyro-phobic

Reggae veteran Capleton is Rastafari's answer to Christian rock: His Jah-themed tracks are either hymnlike and cyclical, or frenetic and piercing, which is his specialty. Give Capleton a drum-based military beat, and he'll pummel it with a

gruff, guttural, rapid-fire flow that's practically trance inducing ("Or Wah," "Real Hot"). It's tough to tune out his lyrical motifs (how often do you hear casual reference to "evil," "wicked" and "corruption"?), but easy to grow weary of his preferred weapon against such nefarious things: blazing fire, praised with high-pitched fervor on track after track. Despite occasional forays into love-and-peace mode, including a dulcet duet with Stephen Marley ("Sunshine Girl"), Capleton delivers a fire-and-brimstone set that will mesmerize listeners — or scare them away.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "In Her Heart," "Undeniable"

ERIC CLAPTON

SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J

★★★

DUCK/REPRISE

The '60s guitar king pays tribute to the '30s blues god. Again.

Eric Clapton can't shake those Robert Johnson blues, no way, no how. Last spring, he paid heartfelt tribute to the train-hopping, pre-WW II blues mythmaker on the album *Me and Mr. Johnson* — now he's back with still another studio homage to

Clapton: "Lordy, I'm rich."



his primary musical hero, this time on a CD/DVD set. Clapton and his band take a confident, hellhound-on-their-trail approach as they effectively link blues with rock on revivals of "Traveling Riverside Blues" and six other gems taken from the long-plundered Johnson treasure chest. Curiously, though, Clapton's most convincing stabs at spiritual intensity come not when he plays guitar, but when he sings. Good sessions, Eric C, but now it's time to move on.

FRANK-JOHN HADLEY

DOWNLOAD: "Milkcow's Calf Blues," "Me and the Devil Blues"

COLLECTIVE SOUL

YOUTH ★★★

EL

Atlanta ex-stars bite the hand that once fed them

Collective Soul's pristinely polished music — alt-rock with all the alt safely removed — sold millions of CDs in the past 10 years, so it was a surprise when Atlantic Records kicked them to the curb after 2000's *Blender* (no relation to the magazine you're holding). The band's first album since then is self-released, and they profess excitement over their freedom: "I'm newly calibrated, all shiny and clean," singer Ed Roland proclaims in a robotically Bowie-sized voice on "Better Now." The gloves come off on "Counting the Days," a scathing indictment of (corporate?) enslavement. But even on an indie label, these power-ballads and gritty rockers are as shiny and clean as when Collective Soul dominated radio. With or without their major label, they pretend like it's still 1994.

ERIK HIMMELSBACH

DOWNLOAD: "Better Now," "Counting the Days"

Amazing Grace

Canuck crew makes a beautiful racket to scare off the Reaper

THE ARCADE FIRE

FUNERAL ★★★★★

MERGE

To the Arcade Fire, it's no contradiction that a CD called *Funeral* should tingle and surge with joy. Funerals are about survival: They transform death into something the living can participate in, grapple with and ultimately get over. This stunning debut has a similar power. When death appears in *Funeral* — which feels like every third syllable — it's almost always accompanied by birth.

Led by husband and wife Win Butler and Regine Chassagne, this art-rock big band whips guitars, cellos, pianos, accordians and drums into a gorgeous, ramshackle clamor. The buzziest indie band in North America, they owe their ascent to gushy blogs and MP3 traffic — which is fitting, because their songs pit Kids vs. the Man, Young vs. Old, Us vs. Them. Consider them Peter Pans for the hipster set.

"Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels)"

captures 24-year-old Butler's obsession with innocence and his fantastical way of exploring it. A blizzard covers the suburbs, burying the parents, and two young lovers meet to start the world over again. Snow is a symbol for death and renewal. Blackouts play a similar role in the gentle, New Wave-tinged "Une année sans lumière." Chassagne — who sings one of the album's best songs, the nostalgic "Haiti," and its worst, the precious "In the Backseat" — shares his preoccupations.

As the parentheses and French title suggest, this youth movement is more pretentious than, say, blink-182's. But while Butler's lyrics can feel overwrought, his desperate yelp and cracked croon add patina and grit to the purple. And the music — whether danceable, bittersweet, stately or avalanching — reveals added nuance with every listen. Which is to say, it ages gracefully.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Neighborhood #3," "Une année sans lumière," "Rebellion (Lies)"

The Arcade Fire regret employing their own parents to style them.





The Diplomats, waiting to bumrush the United Nations.

THE DEARS

NO CITIES LEFT ★★★

SPINART

Second disc from chart-climbing Montreal sextet sounds French — in a good way!

A SINGER NAMED "MURRAY"?

A baroque, Smiths-indebted concept album narrating the end of the world, the Dears' second disc is neither for the faint of heart, nor for those allergic to pretentiousness. But the melodrama — plush with organ, strings, horns and Murray Lightburn's fey, near-operatic incantations — balances American bombast with a coy sensuality as French as it is Britpop. And they can nail a groove. "Lost in the Plot," a hit north of the border, morphs from exquisite lament into pounding condemnation; "Expect the Worst/Cos She's a Tourist" opens with strings cutting against the rhythm, gathers into a whirlwind chorus and galloping beat, then settles into a sumptuous, atonal lounge languor. For an album knee-deep in apocalypse woes, it's an unexpected flash of heavenliness.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Lost in the Plot," "Expect the Worst/Cos She's a Tourist"

DEATH FROM ABOVE 1979

YOU'RE A WOMAN, I'M A MACHINE ★★★

VICE

Toronto headbangers who like it loud, fast and sweaty

This Canadian duo's pulverizing power-metal assault is based on a literal and pleasingly boneheaded interpretation of drum & bass — one guy bashes his kit without mercy (and contributes cat-in-the-hat vocals) while the other tortures his bass guitar (and sometimes a synthesizer) into making suggestively fat and sleazy noises. The general idea is to play as quickly and loudly as possible,



Collective Soul: "Maybe if we follow the yellow lines, we'll find our lost careers."

and the results range from stupid to sexy to irresistibly stupid. DFA79's best songs are evil little vortexes of panic and paranoia, even when they're ostensibly about love ("Romantic Rights") or parenthood ("Going Steady"). That said, "Pull Out," a panting, barely two-minute ode to premature ejaculation, is a perfect match of form and content.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: "Pull Out," "Romantic Rights"

IRIS DEMENT

LIFELINE ★★★

FLARIELLA

Country-gospel chanteuse explores faith and Christianity, but Jesus isn't quite her homeboy

Arkansas-born Iris DeMent recorded three wondrous albums between 1992 and 1996, with 1994's landmark *My Life* conjoining the spiritual hunger and moral outrage of the other two — then her muse ran out. Eight years later, this country-gospel collection offers only one original. DeMent hasn't returned to Jesus — "Once I started rereading the Book," she said, "I was reminded how many

problems I had with it." But she finds enough inspiration in Christian forgiveness and love, and in the unshakable musicality of white Southerners for whom church equaled culture, to revisit Christ's songs. Sober even when they're glad, these renditions won't move lifelong unbelievers the way they do a backslider like DeMent. But thank God they drew her magnificent voice into the studio again.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "He Reached Down," "I've Got That Old Time Religion in My Heart"

DIPLOMATS

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY 2

★★★

DIPLOMATS/KOCH

Led by Cam'ron, hip-hop's hypedest crew turns a mixtape into a rumble

Cam'ron is a great hip-hop makeover story. In 1998 he debuted as a slow-rapping footnote to Ma\$e. Then, in 2002, the Harlem thug signed to Roc-A-Fella, bought an entirely pink wardrobe and transformed his sluggish flow into a catchy, aggressive minimalism for his biggest smash yet, "Oh Boy." Rejuvenated, he released a flood of shit-hot mixtapes with his amorphous Diplomats posse. On their second label release (seventh total, and not to be confused with Cam's new solo album), the aesthetic is one of smothering toughness: Snares slap-box each other, kicks pound in machine-gun bursts, and bombastic samples blare. The stars are Cam and young gun J.R. Writer, who never met a word he couldn't spin five puns from.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Magic," "Aayoo-ight" →



grand theft auto

GAME BOY ADVANCE

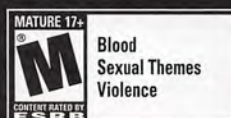


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I LOVE THIS CD!



SCARLETT JOHANSSON ACTRESS: LOST IN TRANSLATION, A LOVE SONG FOR BOBBY LONG



TRESPASSERS WILLIAM DIFFERENT STARS SONIK WIRE

"They've got this female singer, and it's all moody and sad, which I love."

Nice to meet
you too,
Geto Boys!



STEVE EARLE

LIVE FROM AUSTIN TX

★★★★

NEW WEST

Brilliant songs plus a bad attitude equal one country legend in the making

Before songs empathizing with terrorists, before rants against the death penalty and the Iraq war, before arrests, addiction and rehab, before six marriages, Steve Earle was an ornery, gifted songwriter from Texas intent on ripping Nashville from limb to limb. This live

set, recorded in 1986 for the long-running PBS series *Austin City Limits*, captures him on the brink, an edgy nervousness in his voice and (in the companion DVD) a dark glint in his eye. Earle tears through his first two albums, *Guitar Town* and *Exit O*, injecting an Elvis vocal wobble into "Sweet Little '66" and commemorating a trip to oblivion in "The Week of Living Dangerously." These innocent songs come from a moment before his life got worse and his work got even better.

KAREN SCHOEMER

DOWNLOAD: "My Old Friend the Blues," "Guitar Town," "Angry Young Man"

GETO BOYS

WAR & PEACE ★★★

HYPNOTIZE MINDS

Houston shock rappers outlive their obsession with death

NECROPHILIACS
GET JIGGY!

You can't accuse the Geto Boys — once notorious gangstas obsessed with necrophilia — of beating a dead horse. The trio's eighth album since 1988 curbs the shock and aims for airplay. Smartly produced by frontman Scarface and various unknowns, the album casts its net of influence wide: There's Dr. Dre-style drama ("Declaration of War"), jaunty old school ("Yes, Yes, Y'all"), stuttery crunk ("When It Gets Gangsta") and Kanye West's recycled soul ("I Tried"). Nothing here matches 1991's Eminem-anticipating paranoid classic "Mind Playing Tricks on Me." But with their distinct, nasally voices and absurd senses of humor, Scarface and Bushwick Bill still give off whiffs of greatness. Some survivors sound grizzled — these guys finally sound unafraid of their own goofiness.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Nothin' to Show"

THE GOO GOO DOLLS

LIVE IN BUFFALO JULY 4 2004 ★★

WARNER BROS.

Buffalo's favorite sons phone it in from home

In the mid-'90s, this group of raggedy punkish poppers morphed out of obscurity into bland alterna-megahitmakers. Their radio-friendly incarnation dominates this live disc (and accompanying DVD), but material this facile requires salesmanship in a live context — alas, the band can't close the deal. On 1998's "Slide," singer/guitarist Johnny

I LOVE THIS CD!



RICHARD BRANSON
MOGUL STAR OF
THE REBEL
BILLIONAIRE

STEREOPHONICS YOU GOTTA GO THERE TO COME BACK

V2

"They are the best band in England and that's a tall order. It's a shame they haven't truly conquered America yet."

Edward Dougherty/WireImage.com (Richard Branson)

Rzeznik sounds like he burned out on the tune about 500 performances ago, while "Name" and "Iris" suffer from ponderous ballad disease. Only bassist Robbie Takac seems to realize he's got an audience to entertain: Slovenly and Muppet-like (a visual contrast to Rzeznik's chiseled pretty boy), he provides an unpolished jolt of energy on "January Friend." But that's a minor detour for a band otherwise operating on cruise control.

ERIK HIMMELSBACH

DOWNLOAD: "January Friend"

ELY GUERRA

SWEET & SOUR, HOT Y SPICY ☆☆☆

HIGHER OCTAVE

Feisty Mexican star stirs up moody alterna-pop in her second American offering

Defying the sexist and prefab pop roles inflicted on (and embraced by) most female singers in the Spanish-language music world, Ely Guerra released her uncompromising 1999 alternative pop album *Lotofire*, which featured the quirky, American guitarists Marc Ribot and Chris Whitley. On this U.S. follow-up, she comes out more confident than

Incubus:
"Nothing makes
us smile. Not
even Mickey."



ever. Guerra works her waif vocals to a whisper in understated Britpop-inspired songs ("Angelito Heart") or spoken-word coos that try out her accented English ("Puerto Vallarta"). She also brings back the lounge-y electronic breakbeats that made *Lotofire* so intriguing, but on *Sweet & Sour, Hot y Spicy*, she lets the guitars do a lot more of the heavy lifting — they're crunchy when she's in a sour mood and stripped-down acoustic when she's in a hot or spicy mood.

ENRIQUE LAVIN

DOWNLOAD: "Lucrecia y Rigoberto," "El Colchón," "Puerto Vallarta"

BERES HAMMOND

LOVE HAS NO BOUNDARIES ☆☆☆☆

VP

Warning: Jamaican soul vet will make your lady weak in the knees

Why do women swoon over Beres Hammond? Known as the Jamaican Marvin Gaye, he's delivered lovers' rock since the '70s — but Hammond's style is neither slick and studly nor explicitly sexy. Therein lies its greatness: Hammond seduces via a soothing, raspy voice that's sleaze-free, weathered, even a tad scarred.

So when he swears, "No more will I ever blunder" on the beguiling ballad "There for You," you believe him. This collection of consummate love songs — his 19th album — oozes with honesty. On the stripped-down "Let It Flow," the man himself seems to be right beside you. Add Buju Banton's ecstatic ragga outbursts to Hammond's honeyed melodies ("Thanks Fi Mi Pride and Joy"), and it's the best of both worlds, Jamaican-style.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "There for You," "Let It Flow"

INCUBUS

ALIVE AT RED ROCKS ☆☆☆

EPIC

CD/DVD set from nü-metal's most squeezably soft band

Incubus milks concert drama from singer Brandon Boyd's surfer-dude sex appeal: the way he cups the microphone like a trumpet or thrusts a hand drum between his thighs, the moment when he strips off his T-shirt to reveal a thin-white-rope torso. The concert DVD, taped in Denver, serves as a capstone to an era in which Incubus racked up millions in sales by combining →

CAN YOU SEE US? WE CAN SEE YOU.



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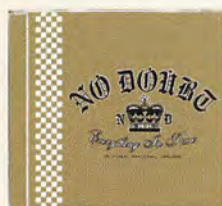
Bee Gees
NUMBER
ONES



Melissa Etheridge
LUCKY LIVE
CD/DVD



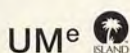
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THE JACKSONS
STORY



No Doubt
EVERYTHING IN TIME
(B-SIDES, RARITIES, REMIXES)



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THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES

Alison Krauss:
"Fifty bucks says
I can eat that
lightbulb."



Kiki:
"Run,
it's Alison
Krauss!"

black PVC pants, while "The End of the World" sees him intoning lyrics in a baritone midway between croon and belch. Best of all is "Luv Sikk Again," on which tempestuous timpani and stirring strings conjure a swoony mood of feverish romance. Proof that faceless techno instrumentals can be as glamorous as any pop diva.

SIMON REYNOLDS

DOWNLOAD: "Luv Sikk Again," "The End of the World"

ALISON KRAUSS AND UNION STATION

LONELY RUNS BOTH WAYS

★★★

ROUNDER

Former bluegrass wunderkind, now 33, blands out

Singer and fiddler Alison Krauss once looked to be the Tiger Woods of bluegrass — a stereo-type-crushing prodigy on her way to becoming an all-time great — and her feathery, fluttering voice is one of country music's most beautiful instruments. But ever since 1995's retrospective *Now That I've Found You* became a surprise hit, she's repositioned herself as a soft pop singer with occasional high lonesome →

KIKI

RUN WITH ME ★★★

BPITCH CONTROL

Finnish-now-Berlinish DJ saves techno from the bores

Dance music today suffers from an overdose of subtlety. Producers riddle tracks with exquisite nuances but forget the sort of gloriously crass riffs that smack you upside the head. Finnish-born Kiki brings the remedy. His unique brand of '80s-flavored house is all about bold strokes and dark drama: "Run With Me" is as slick 'n' sleazy as a pair of

I LOVE THIS CD:

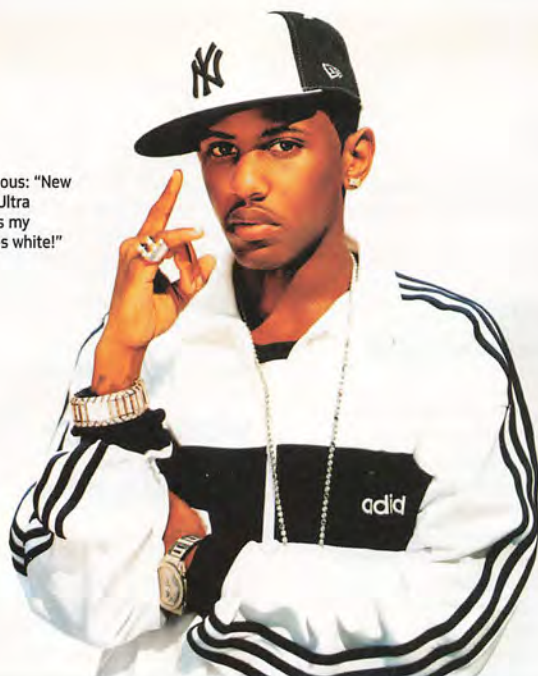


HEATHER GRAHAM
ACTRESS, BOOGIE NIGHTS, EVERQUEST II

VARIOUS ARTISTS
GARDEN STATE:
MUSIC FROM THE
MOTION PICTURE
EPIC

"Zach Braff gave it to me when I did *Scrubs*, and it has cool new bands I didn't know, so it was like a good mixtape."

Fabulous: "New Tide Ultra keeps my whites white!"



Arrogangsta

Brooklyn young'un makes his bid for cockiest MC alive

FABOLOUS

REAL TALK ***

DESERT STORM/ELEKTRA

SINCE HIS 2001 debut, Fabolous has been the PG-13 version of those bling-hoppers who composite obscene wealth, casual violence and knee-jerk misogyny into a worldview. With his third album, not much has changed: Fab still uses money as life's primary metaphor, women as a corollary to success and semiautomatics as a means to protect the former — all while being far more entertaining than threatening.

Real Talk's high points include Black Ice's "Exodus" (a spoken-word intro that's nowhere near as pretentious as you may think), the close-up portrait of everyday urban life on "In My Hood" and "Po Po," a racial-profiling discourse masquerading as an obligatory Nate Dogg number. In between, though, Fabolous — who has never emerged as a fully developed character — mostly raps about a lifestyle, not life itself.

In what passes for romance in Fab's world ("Baby"), he spots a girl at a nightclub with

an "onion" that nearly brings tears to his eyes. It's love at first cry: He brings her to his house, considers buying her a fur and promises to "keep it coming like the singles off *Thriller*." Shrugging off money shots like these, the kid gives Jay-Z a run for his breeziness.

Fabulous is a master with words and he knows it. Only 25 years old, he rhymes with the steely composure of a poker player who's been rigging the game for years; his flow leans back as it thrusts forward, tossing off punch

lines as though they were only whimsical asides. "You never see one of the nastiest lyricists/Speed through like he in *The Fast and the Furious*," he rhymes. It's this tension that keeps *Real Talk* from being a collection of one-serving throwaways: Fabolous lands dazzling lyrical stunts while sounding like he's coasting along on cruise control.

kris ex

DOWNLOAD: "My Hood," "Exodus"

FABOLOUS'S CURRENT LISTENING:

JAY-Z AND R. KELLY
UNFINISHED BUSINESS JIVE/ROC-A-FELLA

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ENCORE SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE

FAB IS A
MASTER
WITH WORDS.

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touches. The utterly flavorless repertoire she sings here (most of it borrowed from contemporary folkies, especially Robert Lee Castleman) steers her toward Lite FM. Her backup quartet, Union Station, are impeccably un-rowdy, and guitarist Dan Tyminski sings a couple of speedy straight-up bluegrass numbers that perk up the album, but it's mostly a snore.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "A Living Prayer"

LOS LONLEY BOYS

LOS LONLEY BOYS ★★

OR/EPIC

Platinum debut from Tejano trio gets the deluxe treatment — and 50 percent more Spanish!

Los Lonely Boys were 2004's unlikely success story — three brawny brothers from Middle-of-Nowhere, Texas, whose debut cracked the top 10. Willie Nelson called them his favorite new band and lite-rock DJs



Los Lonely Boys: "Brown is the new, um, brown."

spun "Heaven" nonstop, while their million-plus fans apparently overlooked the fact that they rhyme *señorita* with *bonita*, and play soulful music without the soul. This "special edition" is the third version of the record to appear in 15 months, and it smells an awful lot like a gimmick: no new songs, per se, just two Spanish reworkings of old ones, a limp Johnny Cash cover and a DVD with music videos and an acoustic

session. Not enough to buy it twice — or even once, for that matter.

JOSH EELS

DOWNLOAD: "More Than Love" (Spanish version)

MARIO

TURNING POINT ★★★

J RECORDS

On R&B teen's sophomore set, age ain't nothing but a number

Meet Usher's Mini-Me: R&B wunderkind Mario. He's still too young to buy a girl a drink, but he aims his soulful weapons of mass seduction at women of all ages. Though the Baltimore-born singer is newly legal (as he tells us on the too-terse club jam "18"), his enticingly even-toned voice — smooth as R. Kelly's — transcends teen-pop. It's even manly enough to convey lovelorn intensity ("Here I Go Again"), offer explicit "Directions" to an uncorrupted gal pal ("Trust me, I got skills"), then sweetly stage an "inti-

mate talk" with her ("Like Me Real Hard"). Only his age-appropriate tracks — the singsong club jingle "Girl I Need," or the irony-free homage to "Nikes fresh out the box" — remind us that Mario is not a boy, but not yet a man.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "Girl I Need," "Let Me Love You"

MASSIVE ATTACK

DANNY THE DOG SOUNDTRACK ★★★★★

VIRGIN

Trip-hop's big kahuna scores cheese-eating, art house kung-fu flick

Robert Del Naja, the British punker kid whose Massive Attack collective added moody new hues to hip-hop in the '90s (while introducing yokel Brit rapper Tricky), composed the score to a zero-gravity porno (really) in 1999. But this is a giant leap forward for his soundtrack CV: a mix of dark, churning dance interludes and

Mosh Up

Rock's biggest neurotics jam with the rapper who calls himself God

JAY-Z & LINKIN PARK

COLLISION COURSE ★★★

WARNER BROS.

HOW'S THIS FOR a bad idea: Jay-Z links up with one of rock's cred-hungriest bands, they record a rehearsal of their primetime MTV mash-up and release the tracks as a CD/DVD set. Sounds like a stick-up, right? Well, don't knock the hustle. Only an executive could dream up a creative risk of this order, but through sheer luck, it works — some of the time.

Mash-ups sync unexpectedly simpatico songs by wildly dissimilar artists. Linkin Park and Jay-Z add an opportunistic edge to the mix, splicing together their hits not for novelty's sake, but to get a boost from the twin chart turbos of metal and hip-hop. There are, predictably, abysmal failures. On Linkin Park albums, Mike Shinoda's passable flow adds texture to the band's emo-metal fury. On "Izzo/In the End," he makes the mistake of re-rapping Jay's verses. If you're not sure which side of this collaboration is holding the talent card, here's a hint: His last name is Z. But Linkin Park *do* have plenty to offer — namely, skull-crushing

guitars and a tortured self-doubt that plays in striking counterpoint to Hova's invincible arrogance.

"Numb/Encore" chops the band's attack into breakbeat jolts; the music's melancholy infuses Jay's previously lukewarm swan song, especially when Chester Bennington belts the chorus, echoing the numbness that led to Jay's final bow. The rest is a grab bag. There's the good: "Dirt off Your Shoulder/Lying From You" sounds like a depth-charge on the dance floor. The bad: "Points of Authority/99 Problems/One Step Closer" can't possibly match Rick Rubin's original production. And the in-between: "Jigga What/Faint" suffers from absurdly contrary sentiment. Still, coming from masters of controlled chaos — both verbal and emotional — even the near misses pack a strange thrill.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD THESE: "Numb/Encore," "Dirt off Your Shoulder/Lying From You"

MIKE SHINODA'S CURRENT LISTENING:

TALIB KWELI
THE BEAUTIFUL STRUGGLE RAINKUS

THE USED
IN LOVE AND DEATH REPRISÉ

Jay-Z and Linkin Park love irradiating their audience.





Even a trip to Ikea bores Shivaree.

weepy bouts of piano-and-strings straight outta Philip Glass by way of Brian Eno. The film — a Luc Besson production wherein Jet Li plays a feral fight slave kept in an animalistic state by his evil “owner” Bob Hoskins until liberated by blind piano tuner Morgan Freeman — couldn’t have asked for more appropriate accompaniment.

TONY POWER

DOWNLOAD: “Atta” Boy,” “Sweet Is Good”

MF DOOM

MM...FOOD ★★★

RHYMESAYERS

Cryptic culinary musings from mysterious, masked MC

Most rappers don’t wear metal masks and record concept albums about food — but then, MF Doom isn’t like most rappers. Over six years, this Atlanta indie eccentric has released 10 albums under four pseudonyms. He structures *Mm... Food* like a menu; it’s his oddball way of proving just how versatile he is (who else would think to rhyme “deuce-deuce” with “fruit juice” and “couscous”?). He juggles battle-rap bravado and fever-dream weirdness: His syllable clumps sound like something Ghostface might mutter in his sleep, while his beats mash together slick ’80s soul, hotel-bar jazz and old film soundtracks. The result is unkempt and challenging, but it works. This is an entrancingly loopy

dispatch from an unhinged MC with one killer case of the munchies.

TOM BREIHAN

DOWNLOAD: “Rapp Snitch Knishez,” “Kookiez”

NEW EDITION

ONE LOVE ★★★

BAD BOY/UNIVERSAL

A Bobby Brown-less New Edition keep it jiggy, workmanlike

In the ’80s, they were a boy band; now they’re an R&B quintet. They spawned wanna-bes (Next, 112), whiteboy simulacra (’N Sync, 98”) and even the disputed “King of R&B” (Bobby Brown, so dubbed by his wife, Whitney Houston). Little, then, is new about New Edition anymore, and *One Love*, which features all members except Brown, proves it. Their eighth album revels in insistent beats designed for synchronized choreography (“Hot 2 Nite,” “All on You”), cheesy lyrics about clubs ‘n’ dubs accented by cheesier rapped interludes, and mea-culpa ballads show-casing creamy falsettos and seamless harmonizing (“Re-Write the Memories”). All R&B clichés, sure, but to New Edition’s credit, they’re the ones who invented them.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: “Hot 2 Nite,” “Re-Write the Memories”

SHIVAREE

WHO’S GOT TROUBLE? ★★★

ZÖE/ROUNDER

News-singing vixen and her jazzy compadres sling ironic, saucy *Casablanca* cabaret

After a stint singing news headlines for Air America, smartass crooner Ambrosia Parsley resumes her cabaret chanteuse role with Shivaree’s third album. Inspired by *Casablanca*, these pointy lounge grouches imagine a Rick’s Café where a pissed Dorothy Parker sits swilling gin fizzes way after hours. A kind of blue-velvet Gwen Stefani, Parsley →



Jay-Z: “Hey, R, that weird yellow stain on your pants came right out.”

The Odd Couple

The sheets and the streets’ not-so-dynamic duo rides again

R. KELLY & JAY-Z

UNFINISHED BUSINESS ★★

JIVE/ROC-A-FELLA

TWENTY SECONDS OF the shabby lead single “Big Chips” is enough to remind us that superstar collaborations are rarely the sum of their parts — Asia anyone? But you have to listen to the whole thing to understand why this reunion fails. As the song rides out on a dinky, tropics-by-way-of-Casino beat, Kelly offers some friendly banter. “Whatchu drinkin’ Jay?”

But Jay has already left (if he was ever in the same studio to begin with). Intentional or not, the awkward silence is louder than a bomb.

It’s ironic that one of their first pairings was 2000’s “Guilty Until Proven Innocent,” Jay’s response to assault charges. Today, the cuffs have traded places: Jay built an empire, while Kelly stands accused of taking his Pied Piper handle a little too seriously. By the time 2002’s *The Best of Both Worlds* hit shelves, Kelly was the one invoking the language of due process.

Unfinished Business is a pro forma Hollywood sequel: The plot reads the same (ladies, you are powerless against cash and

Cristal), and characters have become caricatures.

Throughout, Kelly flaunts his wolfish sexual appetite with little regard for legal strategy: On “Break Up,” he coaxes his girl into make-up sex in no less than 10 places, “even over by the dirty lawnmower.” Meanwhile, Jay’s brags are so lacking in verve (“We got hits like a 30-shot clip”), the CD doesn’t count as coming out of retirement.

This studio disaster has spilled into something more hostile in real life. In November, a tie-in tour derailed into a

wreck of litigation, alleged macings and prima donna accusations. Kelly has retreated farther into his oblivious world — his career was built on peddling horniness, but his unabashed lust nowadays is bizarre, if not disturbing. Hastily slapped together, Jay and Kelly indeed sound like representatives of two worlds, but only one of them is on planet Earth.

HUA HSU

DOWNLOAD: “The Return” (remix)

JAY-Z’S CURRENT LISTENING:

COLDPLAY
A RUSH OF BLOOD TO THE HEAD
CAPITOL

U2
HOW TO DISMANTLE AN ATOMIC BOMB
INTERSCOPE

I LOVE THIS CD!



JOHN TRAVOLTA
ACTOR, LADDER 49,
GREASE

MAROON 5
SONGS ABOUT JANE
OCTONE/J RECORDS

“Maroon 5 put my wife in a video, so we’ve gotten to know their music around the house. It’s good pop-rock.”

"Damn, I think these are Fat Joe's jeans."



("skeet" is crunk-speak for ejaculate) over rumbling go-go percussion, like some porno version of the Tom Tom Club. Slow and stealthy, "Da Blow" is a stoner's anthem — the icy sharpness of the synth melody and the heart-palpitating drumrolls evoke the paranoia zone you enter after one toke too many.

The most strikingly novel aspect is Lil Jon's newfound superproducer clout, manifested by the many famous guests: Snoop Dogg, Nas, Ice Cube, Pharrell Williams, Ludacris and Usher (on the inevitable, cloying ballad "Lovers & Friends," a transparent and somewhat incongruous attempt to make nice to the ladies). There are even guest producers on a couple of tracks. The Neptunes offer the nothing-special "Stick That Thang Out," while Rick Rubin builds on his recent "99 Problems" comeback with "Don't Fuck Wit Me," which pivots around a jagged metal riff in classic Def Jam circa-1986 style.

Crunk seems to favor brawn over brains. But it's not so much stupid music as music whose purpose is to stupefy. The bass is a rolling cloud of concussive low-end, a doom-boom sound that's literally stunning.

What's slightly eerie about Lil Jon's music is how, for all the party-up intent, the actual feel of the tracks is dirge-like. It's a vibe we've encountered in rap before, with 50 Cent's oddly joyless "In Da Club" and the bleak nightlife treadmill depicted on Jay-Z's "Do It Again."

Tilt your ears just a little, and the voices on this album can start to sound like people in agony, rather than in the throes of pleasure. For just a moment, *Crunk Juice* summons to mind a Dirty South update of Dante's *Inferno* — sinners tormented according to their vices, gorging on chicken and beer, lap dancers and weed, until gluttony becomes its own kind of punishment. Although the hallucination passes quickly, and the record becomes "fun" again, this much is clear: Crunkonia might be a great place to visit, but it's not somewhere you'd want to live.

SIMON REYNOLDS

DOWNLOAD: "Da Blow," "Don't Fuck Wit Me," "Aww Skeet Skeet"

Royal Rumble

Señor Crunk writes the perfect soundtrack for fighting, fucking and freaking out — okaay!

LIL JON AND THE EASTSIDE BOYZ

CRUNK JUICE ★★☆☆

TVT

CRUNK IS ONE OF those words that sounds like what it is. The word is probably a contraction of "crazy drunk," but even if you don't care about etymology, you can instantly understand it as a call to unleash your inner beast. Crunk evokes the instinctive or involuntary things in life that make you go *unngh*. No songs yet about shitting (surely it's just a matter of time), but plenty of sex and violence, with the borders between the two blurred. In crunk, the nookie is rough and TLC-free, and the violence is nearly voluptuous.

Although he didn't coin the term, Atlanta crunk mogul Lil Jon has turned it into a transmedia empire encompassing everything from CRUNK!!! energy drinks to porno movies to pimp cups. And his productions for Ying Yang Twins, Petey Pablo and Usher have propelled this

regional underground sound into the mainstream.

One couplet in "Throw It Up" from Lil Jon's previous album, 2002's double-platinum *Kings of Crunk*, distills the genre's worldview into four words: "fuck him/fuck her." But "Get Low," that album's monster single, was the true Crunk Manifesto. Linking base desires and bass frequencies, it featured the immortal couplet "'til the sweat drop down my balls/'til all these bitches crawl." We're talking caveman-dragging-the-wife-by-her-hair stuff here, reptile-brain business, life reduced to appetite and aggression, testosterone and adrenalin.

In "Get Lower," a skit on Lil Jon's new album, comedian Chris Rock offers a hysterical parody of crunk's abasement shtick: "get under under, get lower than a pregnant ant's belly." Which does beg the question: How can music with such bass-ic premises as crunk actually progress?

Crunk Juice doesn't break much with Lil Jon's winning formula. Rather, staying true to the genre's binge approach to pleasure, it offers an intensified version of the sound. So the beats hit harder, the bass is extra gnarly, the lyrics surpass previous peaks of lewd-icrou-

ness and the rowdy choruses are even more blearily belligerent.

Along with synth riffs modeled on house and techno (music Lil Jon first encountered at strip clubs, not raves!), these growly baritone chants are the producer's hallmark. Layering a single voice to sound like a mob, he achieves an effect as in-your-face as a blast of bad breath.

"In the Club" is the best example of the Lil Jon sound, featuring one of those signature whistling synth refrains as heard on Usher's "Yeah!" *Crunk Juice*'s two other killers are less typical. On "Aww Skeet Skeet," girlish voices chant the X-rated chorus

THE BEATS HIT EVEN HARDER NOW.



Roni Size:
"Anyone
got an
Advil?"

drops entredres for NPR-listening porn-surfers, coaxing over a pop vamp, "get me out of this little black mess." A cover of Brian Eno's "Fat Lady of Limbourg" shows the cracks in the band's lacquer, but if you like your sass with old-timey polish, you'll love Parsley's mic-kissing delivery. Although her self-congratulatory vowel massages and consonant caresses suggest she'll always love it more.

LAURA SINAGRA

DOWNLOAD: "New Casablanca," "Little Black Mess," "Someday"

RONI SIZE

RETURN TO V ★★

THRIVE

Electronica juggernaut can't bust from the club ghetto on ninth album

In the mid-'90s, Bristol, England, cradled a vibrant electronica scene, and its DJ laureate was this drum & bass mastermind. Defined by nervous double beats and frantic tempos, D&B soundtracked many American ecstasy binges, but never made a significant commercial

impact here. The same can be said of Size, who's never matched the inventiveness and intensity of his 1997 album *New Forms*. Here, he enlists vocalists from dance (Jocelyn Brown, Beverly Knight) and hip-hop (Dynamite MC, Rahzel) to add humanity and humor to otherwise dense tracks. But the samey, smothering beats make it inaccessible to anyone without a pacifier in their mouth.

NELSON GEORGE

DOWNLOAD: "Out of Breathe," "No More," "Sing"

SMOOSH

SHE LIKE ELECTRIC ★★

PATTERN 25

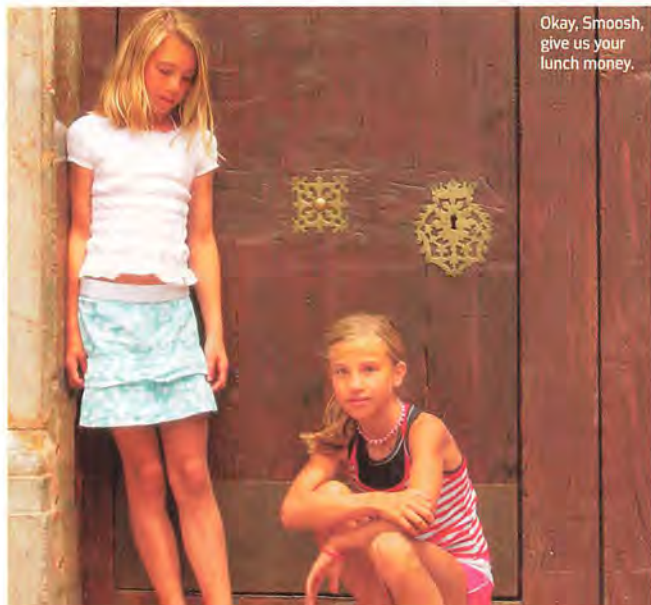
Seattle preteens stay up past beddy-time, write cool songs

If Smoosh singer-keyboardist Asya's voice sounds thin and girlish on her brief, wistful tunes, and

drummer Chloe's timekeeping sometimes stutters, give them a break: Asya is 12 years old and her sister (their last name isn't publicly known) is 10. Even so, they're already more affecting and melody-wise than most bands twice their age; this debut is an opportunity to hear them just as they're finding their voice. Their repertoire includes dreamy ballads, glowering rockers and a couple of odd but jubilant stabs at hip-hop, and Asya's already figured out how to evoke heartache with a few quiet high notes. They're still growing — literally — but they're heading away from their roots in Tori Amos and Ben Folds territory, and toward something all their own.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "Take It Away," "Rad" →



Okay, Smoosh,
give us your
lunch money.



Ludacris prepares to perform his *Guys and Dolls* medley.

Mr. Saturday Night

More standup comedy from the Dirty South Redd Foxx

LUDACRIS

THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT

★★★

DISTURBING THA PEACE/DEF JAM SOUTH

LUDACRIS IS FROM suburban Atlanta, but his guiding principle is pure NYC street corner, circa 1983: If a rhyme isn't packed with punch lines, it isn't worth a damn. Most MCs mention the Tiffany diamond displays around their necks, toss off a pun about ice and then move on. Luda tells us, "It feels like a midget is hanging from my necklace." He's a playa, a balla and a G, but above all, Ludacris is a ham.

His fifth album kicks off with goofy brilliance. Over a smoldering Timbaland-produced intro, Luda does what rappers love to do: announces his return. He does it, of course, with a punch line. "If I appear to be moody, it's 'cause I'm thinking about plans bigger than Serena booty!" "Number One Spot," which chops the *Austin Powers* theme into a vigorous club track, is all punch line, as Ludacris turns Powers-isms into a series of mack brags. "The Ludameister got her feelin' so randaaay," he chuckles, before saluting those horny ladies who beg, "Get in my belly!"

This act is front-loaded, though, and a letdown after *Chicken-N-Beer*, released only a year ago. "Child of the Night" is an unconvincing confessional, while "Pimpin' All Over the World" devotes three minutes too many to the novel concept of doing groupies. "Who, Not Me" is a brawl track so limp it might well force Lil Jon to temporarily suspend Luda's crunk hall pass, and Timbaland steals the show on "The Potion," looping a detuned guitar across a backbeat that rattles like there's something loose in its chassis.

Still, Ludacris takes such infectious relish in his booming Southern-preacher-indebted delivery that it's easy to forgive (and forget) this sag in material. "My pimpin's 3-D," he announces, and it's true: Played subjects (tricked-out rides, riding tricks and raising triggers) can sound vivid when he's stretching his vowels around them. The man himself is a hook.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Large Amounts," "Number One Spot," "The Potion"

LUDACRIS'S CURRENT LISTENING:

LIL JON AND THE EAST SIDE BOYZ
CRUNK JUICE TVT

SHAWNNA
WORTH THA WEIGHT DEF JAM SOUTH

Gwen Stefani's sisters are much more straight-laced.



Turning Japanese

Blender's Woman of the Year ♥s the '80s on uneven solo bid

GWEN STEFANI

LOVE ANGEL MUSIC BABY

★★★

INTERSCOPE

GWEN STEFANI IS famously just a girl — and not just in a song she sang with No Doubt, her once and future band. During a dozen years as pop's Valley girl next door, she's carved out a reputation as a humble Cinderella who somehow keeps hitting the lotto — whether it's with hits, boyfriends or *Vogue* covers. The truth, of course, is that there's ambition bigger than Orange County beneath that platinum blond dome, and it's the collision of image with appetite that makes her solo CD *Love Angel Music Baby* an only sometime thing.

Her label has poured a lot of money and expectation into L.A.M.B., having hired a roster of A-list producers that includes Nellee Hooper, Dr. Dre, André 3000, the Neptunes, Dallas Austin and Terry Lewis & Jimmy

Jam. There aren't any "album tracks" here; this is meant to be a collection of hits, every one swinging for the fences.

Sometimes that works well: "Bubble Pop Electric," one of two collaborations with André 3000, is part '50s teenage romance and part electro-froth. The first single, "What Are You Waiting For," is an irresistible

'80s groove that could single-handedly trigger the Missing Persons revival.

The lyrics, though, expose a certain doubt: Singing in two

different ranges, she stages an argument with herself about going solo. "Naturally, I'm worried if I go it alone," one Gwen sings, and the other Gwen replies, "You never know, it could be great." She wants credit for her mixed feelings, but you can bet that if this record's a hit, the next No Doubt release goes waaaaay back on the burner.

L.A.M.B. is one long love note to the '80s. "Real Thing"

features an intro by former Prince band members Wendy and Lisa and a backing track courtesy of New Order. The Neptunes-produced "Hollaback Girl" finds the intersection of Kelis's "Milkshake" and Toni Basil's "Mickey," and elsewhere there are plenty of Janet Jackson imitations and L'Trimm reanimations. The only significant '80s radio style skipped is the ska revival that No Doubt rode to success.

Stefani clearly wants to evoke the sound of the records she danced to as an unassuming girl at Knott's Berry Farm parties, before No Doubt took off. That she does, but on a record that shares its name with her recently launched clothing line, she's less successful suggesting that she's still that girl.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD: "Rich Girl," "Bubble Pop Electric"

GWEN STEFANI'S CURRENT LISTENING:

TRINERE
ALL NIGHT: THE GREATEST HITS
HOT PRODUCTIONS

CLUB NOUVEAU
LIFE, LOVE & PAIN WARNER BROS.

Rod Stewart — catalog model!



ROD STEWART

THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK, VOLUME III ★

J RECORDS

The aging supermodel scourge gets his soulless cover on — again!

YOUR GRANDMA WILL LOVE IT

Who would have guessed that Rod Stewart would turn into Barry Manilow with laryngitis? That, minus a few decibels of emotion, describes the genial croak he brings to the third installment of his *Great American Songbook* series. The platinum formula: Choose the hoariest American popular standards and perform them in bland arrangements ready-made for fox-trotting seniors with fond memories of spooning to Lawrence Welk. Throw in cheery celebrity cameos (here, Bette Midler, Stevie Wonder, Eric Clapton and Dolly Parton), and you have new-style pop nostalgia for baby-boom grandparents. One of the secrets of this series's huge success is Stewart's distance from the songs: They're uniformly happy tunes performed in a happy voice. Can *Christmas Memories*, featuring Stewart smirking in a Santa suit, be far behind?

STEPHEN HOLDEN

DOWNLOAD: None

I LOVE THIS CD:



KATHY NAJIMY
ACTRESS, THE WEDDING PLANNER, RAT RACE



MELISSA ETHERIDGE
LUCKY ISLAND

"She's a close friend, and finally feels fulfilled in life, and this great record sprang out of that happiness. She has so much passion when she plays."

T.I.

URBAN LEGEND ★★

GRAND HUSTLE/ATLANTIC

On third LP, *Dirty South* rapper gets out of jail early, resumes his wild-as-the-Taliban ways

Last spring, when T.I. turned himself in for violating probation just as his "Rubber Band Man" was strutting up the charts, Cobb County sheriffs weren't the only ones smirking. The 23-year-old Atlantan's drawing, arrogant dissas had sparked beefs with Ludacris, Lil' Flip and a host of other Southern MCs. Now he's free on work-release, and it's clear jail didn't humble him: He declares himself "the greatest" and "the king" on at least five tracks, including "The Greatest" and, um, "Tha King." Despite his charm and conviction, these boasts grow old quickly. Even so, he's got enough production flourishes — David Banner's raise-the-rafters organ riff here ("Count Down"), Swizz Beatz's whistling funk there ("Bring 'Em Out") — to bail him out.

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD: "Count Down," "Bring 'Em Out"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS MOVIE: MUSIC FROM THE MOVIE AND MORE ★★

SIRE/NICK

Hilarious aquatic TV show spawns soggy soundtrack

The subversive spirit evidenced by blissfully oblivious SpongeBob and his Bikini Bottom cronies seems to have gone missing on this formulaic spin-off. The recipe goes something like this: Get a slumming chart topper (here, Avril Lavigne) to belt out the theme song. Add a nonthreatening rapper ("Prince Paul's Bubble Party"), a nearly forgotten metal band eager to reconnect with the kids (the obviously bewildered Motörhead) and a couple of defanged alterna-rock icons ("Just a Kid" marks Wilco's recording nadir). Then mix in a couple of wild cards, namely Ween, whose "Ocean Man" hits the scuba tank hard, and the Flaming Lips, whose "SpongeBob & Patrick Confront the Psychic Wall of Energy" needs no explication. Add popcorn and mix.

RICHARD GEHR

DOWNLOAD: Ween "Ocean Man"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

TEAM AMERICA WORLD POLICE: MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE ★★

ATLANTIC

From the *South Park* guys' puppet-sex film, 16 salutes to the American Way

Once every few years, a soundtrack anthem comes along of such passion

Rufus Wainwright:
"Maybe I do need
a new handkerchief."



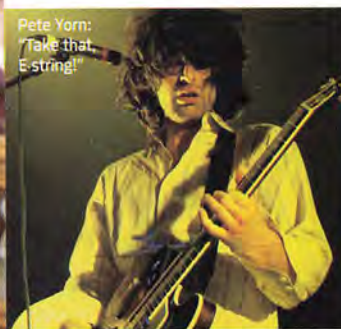
that it burns beyond a film's frames. "Eye of the Tiger." "My Heart Will Go On." And now, "America, Fuck Yeah." A parody of bulging-flight-suit masculinity sung by SP mainman Trey Parker, this is patriotism gone pro-wrestling: "Freedom is the only way now!" he yells, before adding approximately 74 "fuck yeah"s. The satirical sights widen, too, taking in

Rent ("Everyone had AIDS") and *Pearl Harbor* ("The End of an Act"). The Asian-baiting "I'm So Ronery" is the one painfully unfunny moment here. Otherwise, this is satire so close to its mark it could often pass for the real thing.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "America, Fuck Yeah," "Montage"

Pete Yorn:
"Take that
E string!"



RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

WANT TWO ★★

DREAMWORKS

Former party monster gets introspective on dreamy fourth album

Meant to announce the end of his wild period as an acclaimed musical debutante, Rufus Wainwright's *Want One* was a rehab record for drama queens, staging every mood swing like a death scene at the opera. Just a year later, this sequel, packaged with a DVD of a 2003 San Francisco concert, reveals a previously unknown side of the singer: modesty. The mood is so uniformly droopy it seems to be affecting Wainwright's drowsier-than-ever vocals. Even the showstoppers, usually full of witty hissy fits, are notable for their restraint: The haunting "Memphis Skyline" eulogizes the late singer Jeff Buckley; "The Art Teacher" wallows in middle-aged regret; and "Gay Messiah" casts a queer eye on the second coming, while humbly adding, "It won't be me."

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: "Gay Messiah," "The Art Teacher"

PETE YORN

LIVE FROM NEW JERSEY ★★

COLUMBIA

In his native north Jersey, his last name is pronounced "yawn"

Halfway into this two-disc live set, Pete Yorn introduces "Bandstand in the Sky," a tune he wrote for the late Jeff Buckley. "It's kind of depressing," he says sheepishly, "so we're gonna play a good-time version of it." The song, though, falls flat and typifies Yorn's problem. His sleepy-eyed scruff-rock (best heard on 2001's *musicforthemorningafter*) may be perfect for crying over lost love or lounging away a hangover, but Sunday-morning music doesn't play well on Saturday night. Aside from an elegant rendition of "Just Another" (dedicated to "all the beautiful Jersey girls out there") and the obligatory stab at Bruce Springsteen's "Atlantic City," there's nothing here he hasn't done better somewhere else.

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD: "Just Another"

BLENDER APPROVED

The best NEW RELEASES of the past few months



ALAN JACKSON

WHAT I DO

ARISTA NASHVILLE

On the best record of his career, Nashville's finest finds sadness, humor and beauty in everything from newspapers to french fries.

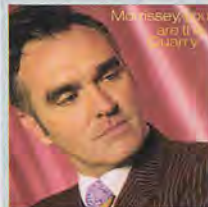


SNOOP DOGG

R&G (RHYTHM AND GANGSTA): THE MASTERPIECE

DOGGYSTYLE/STAR TRACK/GEFFEN

Snoop steps his game up, drops it like it's hot and decides he actually does love them ho's.



MORRISSEY

YOU ARE THE QUARRY (DELUXE EDITION)

ATTACK/SANCTUARY

The ex-Smith's most successful solo album, now with nine B-sides. That's almost twice the brooding!



U2

HOW TO DISMANTLE AN ATOMIC BOMB

INTERSCOPE

Bono and Co. tackle God, sex and death with all the majesty you'd expect from rock's grandest band.

THE

40

MOST POPULAR SONGS IN AMERICA

Nelly's hick-hop jam cracks the top 3 – but Slim still rules.



Eyes right, maggots, eyes right!

2

U2

"VERTIGO"

HOW TO DISMANTLE AN ATOMIC BOMB

Between those ubiquitous iPod commercials and the massive radio play this bilingual hit is getting, it's easy to think U2 are taking over the world, not saving it. But if you still can't get enough, sit tight: They'll be kicking off their world tour in Florida at the beginning of March.

HOW WE DID IT



The Most Popular Songs chart is based on radio and video airplay and album sales. Provided by HITSDailyDouble.com: "Proof that any idiot in the music business can have a website."

POSITION	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM/LABEL
1	"ENCORE"	EMINEM	ENCORE SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE
2	"VERTIGO"	U2	HOW TO DISMANTLE AN ATOMIC BOMB INTERSCOPE
3	"OVER AND OVER"	NELLY FEAT. TIM MCGRAW	SUIT FO' REEL/UNIVERSAL
4	"BREAKAWAY"	KELLY CLARKSON	BREAKAWAY RCA
5	"RUMORS"	LINDSAY LOHAN	SPEAK CASABLANCA/UNIVERSAL
6	"WHAT YOU WAITING FOR?"	GWEN STEFANI	LOVE ANGEL MUSIC BABY INTERSCOPE
7	"SOLDIER"	DESTINY'S CHILD	DESTINY FULFILLED COLUMBIA
8	"DROP IT LIKE IT'S HOT"	SNOOP DOGG	R&G (RHYTHM & GANGSTA) DOGGYSTYLE/STAR TRAK/GEFFEN
9	"NUMB/ENCORE"	JAY-Z & LINKIN PARK	COLLISION COURSE WARNER BROS.
10	"MY BOO"	USHER FEAT. ALICIA KEYS	CONFESSIONS LAFACE
11	"1, 2 STEP"	CIARA	GOODIES LAFACE
12	"NOBODY'S HOME"	AVRIL LAVIGNE	UNDER MY SKIN ARISTA
13	"BRING 'EM OUT"	T.I.	URBAN LEGEND GRAND HUSTLE/ATLANTIC
14	"OYE MI CANTO"	N.O.R.E	NOREMINADE ROC-A-FELLA
15	"DISAPPEAR"	HOOBASTANK	THE REASON ISLAND
16	"GET BACK"	LUDACRIS	THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT OT/DEF JAM SOUTH
17	"BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS"	GREEN DAY	AMERICAN IDIOT REPRISE
18	"SUNDAY MORNING"	MAROON 5	SONGS ABOUT JANE OCTONE/J RECORDS
19	"LALA"	ASHLEE SIMPSON	AUTOBIOGRAPHY GEFFEN
20	"FALL TO PIECES"	VELVET REVOLVER	CONTRABAND RCA
21	"PARTY FOR TWO"	SHANIA TWAIN	GREATEST HITS MERCURY NASHVILLE
22	"ONLY U"	ASHANTI	CONCRETE ROSE THE INC./DEF JAM
23	"JUST LOSE IT"	EMINEM	ENCORE SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE
24	"MR. BRIGHTSIDE"	THE KILLERS	HOT FUSS ISLAND
25	"LOSE MY BREATH"	DESTINY'S CHILD	DESTINY FULFILLED COLUMBIA
26	"WHAT U GON' DO"	LIL JON	CRUNK JUICE TVT
27	"DAUGHTERS"	JOHN MAYER	HEAVIER THINGS COLUMBIA
28	"SHE WILL BE LOVED"	MAROON 5	SONGS ABOUT JANE OCTONE/J RECORDS
29	"EVIL"	INTERPOL	ANTICS MATADOR
30	"BEAUTIFUL SOUL"	JESSE MCCARTNEY	BEAUTIFUL SOUL HOLLYWOOD
31	"KARMA"	ALICIA KEYS	THE DIARY OF ALICIA KEYS J RECORDS
32	"HOME"	THREE DAYS GRACE	THREE DAYS GRACE JIVE
33	"GIVE A LITTLE BIT"	THE GOO GOO DOLLS	LIVE IN BUFFALO JULY 4, 2004 WARNER BROS.
34	"BALLA BABY"	CHINGY	POWERBALLIN' CAPITOL
35	"DARE YOU TO MOVE"	SWITCHFOOT	THE BEAUTIFUL LETDOWN RED INK/COLUMBIA
36	"BLOOD RED SUMMER"	COHEED AND CAMBRIA	IN KEEPING SECRETS... EQUAL VISION/COLUMBIA
37	"I JUST WANNA LIVE"	GOOD CHARLOTTE	THE CHRONICLES OF LIFE AND DEATH EPIC
38	"RIGHT TO BE WRONG"	JOSS STONE	MIND BODY AND SOUL 5-CURVE
39	"ONLY ONE"	YELLOWCARD	OCEAN AVENUE CAPITOL
40	"BABY IT'S YOU"	JOJO	JOJO BLACKGROUND/UNIVERSAL

4

KELLY CLARKSON

"BREAKAWAY"

BREAKAWAY



The American Idol without a dieting problem or a creepy song about spying on girls returns! The single gets a boost from its tie-in to the *Princess Diaries 2*. This month, Kelly hits the stage for Xmas radio concerts in New York, Boston and Portland.

11

CIARA

"1, 2 STEP"

GOODIES

Lil Jon's R&B protégé has already sold more than 500,000 copies of her debut thanks to "Goodies." Here, she proves she's more than a one-crunk wonder. Last month she sang for Steve Harvey. This month she presents at the *Billboard* awards.



30

JESSE MCCARTNEY

"BEAUTIFUL SOUL"

BEAUTIFUL SOUL

The 17-year-old heartthrob launches his fledgling musical career with this ode to



inner beauty. If you missed him on NBC's *Ultimate Toy Awards*, don't worry – he'll be back at his day job when the WB drama *Summerland* returns this month.

THE 10 MOST POPULAR RING TONES IN AMERICA

Rapping. Acting. Alerting you that Grammy is calling. What can't Snoop do?

- 1 "DROP IT LIKE IT'S HOT" SNOOP DOGG
- 2 "SHORTY WANNA RIDE" YOUNG BUCK
- 3 "I'M SO FLY" LLOYD BANKS
- 4 "WONDERFUL" JA RULE
- 5 "MY BOO" USHER FEAT. ALICIA KEYS
- 6 "NO PROBLEM" LIL SCRAPPY
- 7 "LOSE MY BREATH" DESTINY'S CHILD
- 8 "GOODIES" CIARA FEAT. PETEY PABLO
- 9 "LEAN BACK" TERROR SQUAD
- 10 "LOCKED UP" AKON

SOURCE: VIRGIN MOBILE



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YOU DIE
YOU RESET.

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“I’M A LITTLE DIRTY...”

He’s utterly convincing as *Entourage*’s thespian playboy Vince Chase, so is it any wonder that **Adrian Grenier** knows the best music to accompany a long night of debauchery?

BY LAUREN SANDLER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

Grooming by Andie Markoe Byrne using Kiehl’s

THE CD I LIKE TO STEAL FROM



PINBACK

PINBACK

ACE FU

"One of my best friends died not too long ago, and this record reminds me of him. We played music together and we only ever wanted to be Pinback. It was the one band when we first met that soldered us together. He and I wrote a couple of songs inspired by their style. I think it's important to steal from artists — blatant, straight up. And we did."

THE CD FOR MY INNER BIVALVE



WEEN

THE MOLLUSK

ELEKTRA

"You can tell a lot of my psychological makeup from these albums. Like, what is a mollusk? It's slimy, slug-like; it slithers about with saliva-like moisture all around it. So what does that say about me? I don't know! I was in Long Island at my mom's house — a beautiful bright sunny day — and I blasted it. And it made me think, everything is so fucked up yet somehow we persevere."

THE CD FOR MY INNER BLACK MAN



FUNKADELIC

MUSIC FOR YOUR MOTHER

WESTBOUND

"Funkadelic's music blew the lid off my understanding of what music could be, tore the roof off the motherfucker. This was the first album that ever said 'hi' to my soul, to that part of me that is a little funky. I was cool but I had no groove. I'd already discovered Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin but Funkadelic was a whole new ball game after that. It brings out the brother in me."

THE CD THAT MAKES ME FEEL DIRTY



JOHN FRUSCIANTE

NIANDRA LADES & USUALLY JUST A T-SHIRT

AMERICAN

"My ex-girlfriend introduced me to Frusciante. I was living with her at her parents' house, but they didn't know. We would sleep in and listen to this before I would sneak out of the house. I'm a little dirty — I have very raw taste in music and I feel like my emotions are raw. And I feel like he is so unapologetic — he's just letting it all out. It's haunting. He's like a banshee."

THE CD THAT BRIGHTENS UP A PIGSTY



ALI FARKA TOURE

NIAFUNKÉ

HANNIBAL

"I discovered this in Los Angeles when I was staying at my manager's house, this really gross bachelor pad. Things were moldy and there were piles of mattresses. Like somewhere that Dahmer would chop up his victims, eat lunch, masturbate and then have a good nap. I got this and put it in the little boom box he had and it just took me out of the room. I was somewhere else, a foreign country, a different room."

THE CD FOR COMING DOWN AT 6 A.M.



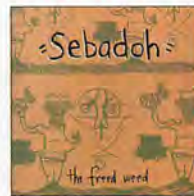
MY BLOODY VALENTINE

LOVELESS

SIRE

"It's very celestial — it traverses the cosmos. My roommate and I would always put on this album before we went to bed. We'd put it on when it's 5 or 6 in the morning. The light's just coming up and you're coming down from whatever the night before entailed. You don't feel bad — you didn't vomit or anything — and it kinda coasts you down. Brings you to slumber until about 3 in the afternoon."

THE CD THAT TELLS THE TRUTH ABOUT LOVE



SEBADOH

THE FREED WEED

HOMESTEAD

"My friend used to steal CDs. Great friend to have. He would just go in and walk out with fifty or a hundred of them. He gave me this and I was thankful. It's fuckin' depressing — that's why I love it. One song that has shaped my relationships is the line that goes, 'Soon we'll be together/And maybe even touch each other/Pretend it's forever/And then proceed to crush each other.' And I'm like, yeah, every single time."

THE CD FOR MY NERDY AIR GUITAR SOLOS



WEEZER

WEEZER

GEFFEN

"This is my air guitar album. I can put on my dark-rimmed glasses and I don't have to touch anybody and I can mosh in the safety of my own home. I'd be scared to death to ever be at a limpbizkit concert — not that I ever would be — because of the violence of the moshing. This reminds me of my moshing days, but I don't have to get hurt while doing it."

THE CD I'D START A FIGHT OVER



THE SHINS

OH, INVERTED WORLD

SUB POP

"I first heard this on the radio, like I hear a lot of music. Which can be a serious burden to my schedule, 'cause I won't leave my house because I'm waiting for the DJ to come on. It's a timeless album — I want everyone to listen to it. I was at a show for this album and heard some people say they didn't think it was all that hot. I wanted to fight them."

THE CD THAT RESTARTS ANY PARTY



MAGNETIC FIELDS

GET LOST

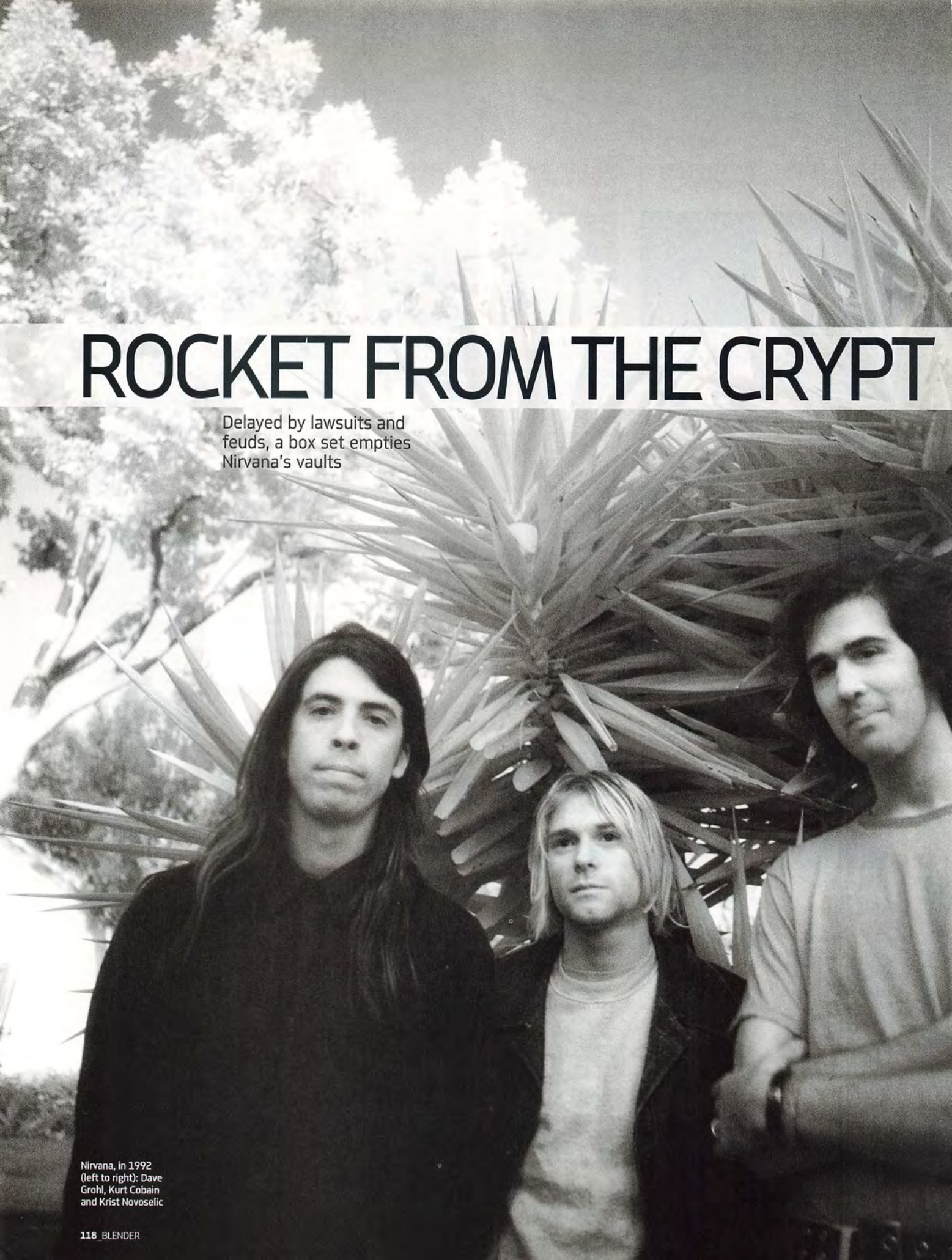
MERGE

"I DJ a little bit, but no one ever dances when I DJ 'cause I end up playing stuff you can't dance to, like Noël Coward. But this is the best album to be drunk to at 4 in the morning, when everyone in the room has their second wind. And it's great. Even my friend who is reluctant to party — he hops around and you know everything is OK."

→ Season 2 of HBO's *Entourage* will begin airing this spring.

AND MORE...

APPLES IN STEREO TONE
SOUL EVOLUTION BABY
DAYLINER HIGH HEART
AND LOW ESTATE THE
BEATLES THE BEATLES
BECK ONE FOOT IN THE
GRAVE BELLE AND
SEBASTIAN TIGERMILK
BJÖRK DEBUT BLOCKHEAD
MUSIC BY CAVELIGHT
BLONDE REDHEAD
BLONDE REDHEAD
BROADCAST WORK AND
NON-WORK PABLO CASALS
BACH: CELLO SUITES
CLINIC INTERNAL
WRANGLER LEONARD
COHEN THE BEST OF
LEONARD COHEN
CORNELIUS FANTASMA
NOËL COWARD BEST OF
THE CURE GALORE DJ
SHADOW INTRODUCING
DR OCTAGON DR.
OCTAGONECOLOGYST
DUB-I DUB-L'S IN TOWN
ENRON BELIEVE! BRIAN ENO
HERE COME THE WARM
JETS FAUST FAUST IV
FLAKE MUSIC WHEN YOU
LAND HERE, IT'S TIME TO
RETURN THE FOUR
CORNERS SAY YOU'RE A
SCREAM GANG STARR
STEP IN THE ARENA THE
GIRAFFES HELPING YOU
HELP YOURSELF
GODSPEED YOU BLACK
EMPEROR! LIFT YOUR
SKINNY FISTS LIKE
ANTENNAS TO HEAVEN
HEAVY VEGETABLE THE
AMAZING UNDERSEA
ADVENTURES OF AQUA
KITTY AND FRIENDS
HELMET MEANTIME THE
HEPTONES COOL RASTA
MICHAEL JACKSON OFF
THE WALL KRAFTWERK
TRANS- EUROPE EXPRESS
THE LADYBUG
TRANSISTOR THE
ALBEMARLE SOUND
LATYRX THE ALBUM
FRANKIE LYMON THE BEST
OF BOB MARLEY SOUL
REBEL DOUG MARTSCH
NOW YOU KNOW MAZZY
STAR AMONG MY SWAN
JACKIE MITTOMAKA FAT
THELONIOUS MONK SOLO
MONK MOS DEF BLACK ON
BOTH SIDES NEW! NEU!
GARY NUMAN THE
PLEASURE PRINCIPLE NICO
CHELSEA GIRL N.W.A
STRAIGHT OUTTA
COMPTON OL' DIRTY
BASTARD NIGGA PLEASE
OS MUTANTES OS
MUTANTES AUGUSTUS
PABLO EAST OF THE RIVER
NILE PAVEMENT SLANTED
AND ENCHANTED LEE
"SCRATCH" PERRY
ARKOLOGY THE PIXIES
DOOLITTLE THE RAPTURE
ECHOES DIANGO
REINHARDT 1934-1935
THE RENTALS RETURN OF
THE RENTALS THE SEA
AND CAKE NASSAU SILVER
APPLES SILVER APPLES
CONTACT SLINT
SPIDER-LAND ELLIOTT
SMITH FIGURE 8
STEREOLAB EMPEROR
TOMATO KETCHUP STEREO
TOTAL MUSIQUE
AUTOMATIQUE TELEVISION
MARQUEE MOON THE
VASELINES THE WAY OF
THE VASELINES VELVET
UNDERGROUND VU
YELLOWMAN MISTER
YELLOWMAN YOUNG
MARBLE GIANTS
COLOSSAL YOUTH NEIL
YOUNG AFTER THE GOLD
RUSH FRANK ZAPPA HOT
RATS



ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT

Delayed by lawsuits and feuds, a box set empties Nirvana's vaults

Nirvana, in 1992
(left to right): Dave
Grohl, Kurt Cobain
and Krist Novoselic

NIRVANA WITH THE LIGHTS OUT

★★★★

GEFFEN

THE TITLE OF Nirvana's most famous song — which Kurt Cobain later claimed to despise — was a rallying cry for alienated youth and marketing men alike. "Smells Like Teen Spirit" not only galvanized a generation, it identified a demographic. After Cobain killed himself in April 1994, a posthumous industry took root, from biographies to bootlegs to the dubious transformation of his rambling journals into a coffee-table book.

The official musical output, on the other hand, has been limited to two essential live albums, *MTV Unplugged in New York* (1994) and *From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah* (1996), and a useless 2002 best-of that dangled the "new" song "You Know You're Right" as bait. But now, after years of legal wrangling between Cobain's always-up-for-a-court-date widow, Courtney Love, and the surviving band members, bassist Krist Novoselic and drummer Dave Grohl, comes this brick of unprocessed angst, a three-CD-one-DVD box culled from demos, radio sessions and live performances.

With 81 chronologically ordered tracks totaling nearly five hours (mostly previously unreleased versions of semifamiliar songs), *With the Lights Out* can be a slog. But for Nirvana fans, it's also a necessary rite — it speaks louder than any biography could. Disc 1 opens with a sloppy cover of Led Zeppelin's "Heartbreaker," recorded at the band's first gig, a 1987 house party in the backwoods of Raymond, Washington. The initial demos, predating their 1989 debut, *Bleach*, are muddy and shapeless, with little to set them apart from the sea of unwashed flannel that cloaked the Reagan-era Pacific Northwest.

But Cobain soon realized that grunge didn't have to be leaden. He got juvenile doodles like the squeaky "Beans" out of his system early, and overcame his fear of pop beauty (check out the harmonies on "Clean Up Before She Comes"). Their eccentric taste in covers was there early — some of the best tracks are rousing versions of Leadbelly's antique folk-blues laments.

Spanning the two hectic years before *Nevermind*, Disc 2 highlights Cobain's newfound authority as a singer. His vocals stretch from strangled yowls to bruised whispers, his hooks sharpen and his lyrics grow more vivid in their cut-and-paste poeticism. It was also around this time, after a revolving door of drummers, that

the band intensified their sonic assault by snagging brute-force basher Grohl, who introduced a frisky and fleet snappiness, and made his first merciless appearance on the propulsive "Aneurysm."

Hearing *Nevermind* in skeletal form, you grasp just how much Butch Vig's gutsy, shiny production enabled that album's paradoxical triumph, channeling outsider resentment into charged anthems of communal rage. Still, a rehearsal demo of "Teen Spirit" almost recaptures the thrill of experiencing it for the first time. The sketchy recording sounds like it's sputtering out of a faraway boom box — and is all the more shockingly powerful for it. The song still packs a visceral punch that the combined embarrassment of a Weird Al spoof, Tori Amos cover and *Moulin Rouge* cameo can't quite dilute.

Disc 3 mostly constitutes a sonogram of *In Utero* (1993). Though hooked on heroin and mired in media feuds, Cobain showed signs of becoming a more potent, more personal songwriter. Producer Steve Albini later gave these rants a cold, harsh clarity; the blueprints — haphazard and petulant, flirting with self-sabotage — are uncomfortably compelling snapshots of inner turmoil.

The set concludes with acoustic home recordings made mere months before Cobain's suicide, best among them the cracked, spooky ballad "Do Re Mi," one of the last songs he wrote.

The DVD opens with a 1988 rehearsal at Novoselic's mom's house. The camera-work gets increasingly drunken (you can practically smell the cheap beer), and Cobain faces the wall awkwardly throughout. Other landmarks include Grohl's first show and the live debut of "Teen Spirit." The post-fame routines are notable for their greater professionalism — and cynicism. "Do you know how much money we have?" Cobain sneers at a '92 gig.

The disc ends with a goofy studio cover of the cloyingly weepy '70s pop hit, "Seasons in the Sun," with Cobain on drums, making up the words. Dating from early '93, it's probably the most lighthearted Nirvana footage that exists, but the macabre undertow is impossible to miss: "It's hard to die/When all the birds are singing in the sky." As we now know, 15 months later, on a spring day in a Seattle greenhouse, Kurt Cobain would beg to differ. DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: "Clean Up Before She Comes" (demo), "Ain't It a Shame" (demo), "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (rehearsal demo)

THE SCORE >>

★★★★★

EXCELLENT. A MUST-HAVE

★★★★

GREAT. CHECK IT OUT

★★★

GOOD

★★

JUST OK

★

WEAK

808 STATE

PREBUILD ★★★

REPHLEX

Early tracks from the rave forefathers who gave techno a vicious case of the heebie-jeebies

Some dance music is sultry, and some dance music is nervous. This Manchester techno troupe helped pioneer acid house, an irascible and

insistent style that preceded the rave movement of the late '80s and early '90s. Based on the liquid, squelchy, Roland TB-303 bassline, acid is consummate paranoid music. On "Clonezone," drum machines explode at unpredictable intervals while synths suggest massive walls collapsing: anxiety vs. certain doom. "Sex Mechanic" sasses up the clinical electro-funk of Bambaataa and Mantronix, while "C.I.S." and "K.Narcosa" sound like conversations between computers. "Thermo Kings" sums up the group well: fourteen minutes of shrieks, video game sounds and shuffling drums that suggest a well-organized party slowly shearing off into shards.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD: "Massagerama," "Clonezone"

BEE GEES

NUMBER ONES ★★★★★

UNIVERSAL

Falsetto genius and feathered hair from three Aussie brothers

On the best Bee Gees records, sound sings. But about half the number



The Bee Gees return from being castrated.

one hits on this compilation are in an antique pop-rock style ("Massachusetts," "Words"), displaced by the band's later reincarnation as sonic savants. The shift involved their unforeseeable discovery of American R&B ("Jive Talkin'"), their pluperfect immersion in disco ("Stayin' Alive" from the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack, which they dominated) and their creation of 1979's "Tragedy," one of history's

four or five most head-spinning high-impact pop records. Far from being a diversion from their '60s Beatlesque quivers, dance music made the Bee Gees: Wrapped in soul and technology and white polyester, they rewrote the course of pop and realized their own smart, cool, luxurious, down-to-earth selves.

JAMES HUNTER

DOWNLOAD: "Tragedy," "Stayin' Alive," "Jive Talkin'"

Unimedia (Rev. U.S.A. (Bee Gees); Bettman/Corbis (Beatles))

Beatlemania

Mark our words: These guys are gonna be huge. . .

THE BEATLES

THE CAPITOL ALBUMS, VOL. 1 ★★★★★

CAPITOL

IN ANY SELF-respecting Beatles discography, these four 1964 U.S. albums — two absolutely superb, one classic, one damn close, all on CD for the first time — don't exist. Snobs define the Beatles canon by the U.K. catalogue, because the LPs were systematically shortened and reshuffled for U.S. sale.

Only benighted Yanks remember the Americanized *Meet the Beatles!* rather than *With the Beatles* and *Beatles '65* rather than *Beatles for Sale* — makeshift albums that, as hagiographer Mark Hertsgaard sniffs, "did not reflect their musical development." We're such oafs.

And okay — in those cases the Brit versions rule. *With* is a fairer introduction than *Meet*, which hid Paul's goody-goody *Music Man* cover "Till There Was You" amid 11 originals. But soon Yanks got *The Beatles' Second Album*, which proves in 28 minutes how indelible the band was from the start.

Five magnificent covers — George replicates Chuck Berry, John does justice to Smokey Robinson and, on a track that was a U.K. EP-only, Paulie smokes Little Richard — join the wildest and most joyful early Beatles single, "She Loves You." This landmark, like the EP-only "I Call Your Name," and every other Lennon-McCartney original on *Second Album*, was never included on any canonical album in a '60s U.K. where it was considered bad form for LPs to reprise singles.

Second Album established them as a seismic force, and the other prize, *Something New*, showed they could do no wrong. It's a glorious hodgepodge of singles (including Ringo's "Matchbox" b/w John's "Slow Down") and songs from *A Hard Day's Night*, which United Artists controlled in the U.S., but the crowning touch is a German dub of "I Wanna Hold Your Hand." Ten months after the Beatles invaded, it made that instant chestnut something new again. Kinda like this box.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "She Loves You," "Long Tall Sally," "Please Mr. Postman"

The Beatles: "John, I dare you to say we're bigger than Jesus."



BON JOVI

100,000,000 BON JOVI FANS CAN'T BE WRONG ★★

ISLAND

Hair metal's Last Band Standing
release huge 20th-anniversary box

Give them an A for effort. This boxed set of B-sides and rarities traces Bon Jovi's career arc – from goofy pop-metal bombast to leaden, sub-Springsteen bombast – confirming that they are rock's biggest sweat act, specialists at pummeling listeners into submission with neck-veins-bulging exertion. Whether you think all that huffing and puffing is worth it depends on your tolerance for Richie Sambora's gruesomely theatrical guitar solos and dozens of thinly-disguised "Livin' on a Prayer" rewrites. But songs like 1985's "We Rule the Night," in which you can practically hear the zip and whisper of spandexed thighs, make it clear that Jovi's best music was their first: the garish cheese they perfected when they were still a scruffy little band opening arena shows for Ratt.

JODY ROSEN

DOWNLOAD: "We Rule The Night," "Nobody's Hero," "Livin' On a Prayer" (demo)

SHAWN COLVIN

POLAROID: A GREATEST HITS COLLECTION ★★★

COLUMBIA

Earnest retrospective from Grammy-winning singer-songwriter

For 15 years now, Shawn Colvin has proved herself to be a consistently pleasant, if rarely pulse-quickening, singer of nice, demure folk. She's guided by an easily bruised heart – even when she's covering tracks by Tom Waits, the Police and Talking Heads, she makes them sound inconsolably sad. But this collection reveals a crucial Achilles heel: Ultimately, Colvin's songs, though pretty, are so formulaic, so lacking in bite, that they more closely resemble early Jewel than Colvin's hero Joni Mitchell. Amidst the whimsy, though, there are occasional moments of melancholic wonder. Her version of the Beatles's "I'll Be Back" is the whispering sound of heartbreak, while the title track is simple, subtle and exquisitely tender.

NICK DUERDEN

DOWNLOAD: "I'll Be Back," "Polaroids"

THE CURE

THREE IMAGINARY BOYS ★★★

ELEKTRA/FICTION/RHINO

The future emperors of new wave struggle to their feet

The Cure's 1979 debut – clandestinely recorded with the Jam's

Bon Jovi await arrival of "steel horses."



gear – was the most tensed-up album that had yet come out of new wave, a dozen angsty blurts from 20-year-old Robert Smith and a rudimentary rhythm section, recorded with the coldest, most clipped tone they could manage. Its deliberately bloodless cover of Jimi Hendrix's lusty "Foxy Lady" was as much a signal of Smith's existentialist despair as his songs about watching taps drip. The revelation of the bonus disc's 1977 to 1979 demos and outtakes is that the Cure initially tried to be a punk rock band, and weren't very good at it. But you can hear Smith stripping away the bluster from his songs, and learning to let his voice's eccentricities carry them.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "10:15 Saturday Night," "Object," "Boys Don't Cry"

THE HIVES

BARELY LEGAL ★★★

BURNING HEART/EPITAPH

From Sweden with spite – uniformed neopunks' debut is fast, trim and cranky

The Hives lacked the cash for matching suits back in 1997, but they'd already carefully tailored their sound. Like the Cramps and Ramones before them, the quintet streamlines and supercharges '50s and '60s rockabilly, surf music and garage rock – then adds boatloads of attitude. "The Stomp," a Cramps-like instrumental, features fuzz bass, trebly guitar and funhouse cackling, while "I'm a Wicked One" turns Bobby Rydell's 1960 single "Wild One" to the dark side. Other tunes introduce singer Pelle



Shawn Colvin prepares to reveal lizard head.

Almqvist's crusade against – to cite three song titles – idiots, schmucks and ass-kissers. The Hives don't suffer dawdlers gladly, either: They dispatch these 14 double-time stompers in less than 28 minutes.

MARK JENKINS

DOWNLOAD: "The Stomp," "I'm a Wicked One"

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

THE HOLY BIBLE: 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION ★★★

EPIC IMPORT

Deluxe reissue of Welsh provocateurs' lacerating 1994 masterpiece

"I wanted to rub the human face in its own vomit and force it to look in the mirror." With that quotation from novelist J.G. Ballard on its sleeve, the Manic Street Preachers' third album – released a year before depressive guitarist and lyricist Richey Edwards's still-unsolved disappearance – announced that it would be no joyride. While the Britpop party was in full swing, the Manics were agonizing over personal afflictions (self-mutilation, anorexia) and political traumas (the Holocaust, the death penalty), and taking musical cues from such similarly unrelenting manifestos as Joy Division's *Closer* and Nirvana's *In Utero*. Revisited with a DVD, it's still one of the most vital British releases of the '90s.

DORIAN LYNSEY

DOWNLOAD: "Yes," "Faster"

MANZEL

MIDNIGHT THEME ★★★

DOPEBROTHER

Hip-hop DJ resurrects heavily sampled but hard-to-find '70s funk gem

Synthesizer pop may have been an '80s thing, but synthesizer funk is pure '70s, thanks to the tight grooves laid down by keyboard wizards Herbie Hancock, Stevie Wonder and Billy Preston.

Manzel Bush worked in a similar →

BURIED TREASURE

UNEARTHING LOST CLASSICS

TOM WAITS

RAIN DOGS ★★★★★

ISLAND, 1985



Waits: "Anyone seen my hat?"

While most pop music flatters the fashionable, Tom Waits champions losers. A master of theatrical, twisted blues, he reached his hypnotic peak with this album's lovably demented characters. But it wasn't just his twisted storytelling and Doberman voice that inspired everyone from PJ Harvey to Modest Mouse.

Throughout, gutter percussion and irritable horns humanize his luckless narratives. And when he drops the clatter for a sweet ballad, he sings to the misunderstood weirdo in us all.

TIM GRIERSON

DOWNLOAD: "Clap Hands," "Time"



style, with far less renown, though his ultra-smooth "Midnight Theme" was sampled for rap hits including Cypress Hill's "How I Could Just Kill a Man" and De La Soul's "Plug Tunin'." Incredibly, this Kentucky keyboardist's rep was based on only two ultra-rare 45s (copies have sold for upwards of \$1,600) before remixer Kenny "Dope" Gonzalez of Masters At Work tracked down Manzel, now a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army, and assembled this disc of originals and remixes. Packed with sinuous, groove-heavy instrumentals, it's a sophisti-funk goldmine — and a bargain compared to the vinyl.

J.D. COSIDINE

DOWNLOAD: "Midnight Theme," "Space Funk"

MANDY MOORE

THE BEST OF ★★

EPIC

Blender's fave Neutrogena model condenses her first four albums

Britney had her romance with Justin.



Mandy Moore discovers "666" birthmark.

Christina had assless chaps. Even fellow good girl Jessica had a high-profile abstinence. But unlike her teen-pop peers, squeaky-clean, preternaturally mature Mandy Moore never gave us much to care about other than her music. Which is why this is a best-of and not a greatest hits — it takes more than poise and

polished production (both of which Moore has) to transcend a genre as confining as hers. But while this collection is never great, it is — from the dear-diary longing of "Crush" to its emotional flip-side, a spit-shined take on Todd Rundgren's "Can We Still Be Friends"—consistently good. And as Moore might say, sometimes just being good is enough.

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD: "Crush," "Can We Still Be Friends"

NOFX

THE GREATEST SONGS EVER WRITTEN (BY US) ★★

EPITAPH

Call punk goofballs still lighting farts two decades later

In punk there are the lucky, the talented and Fat Mike. NOFX's singer-bassist has worked his ass off twice to get where he is today — as we speak, he's probably washing underwear for the band's next tour. NOFX are punk party enemas who

believe simple is better: they've never written a rock opera or dated Kelly Osbourne. These 27 tunes capture a career that spans two decades, much highway and many bong loads. Their puns would wake Rodney Dangerfield (and kill him all over again), and they prove not all whiteboys can play ska. Still, their new tune, "Wore Out Soles of My Party Boots," shows these old punks have only gotten funnier and more anthemic with time.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD: "Linoleum," "Stickin' in My Eye," "Wore Out Soles of My Party Boots"

SEAL

BEST: 1991–2004 ★★

WARNER BROS.

Dippy hippie remakes his hits

Philosopher or blowhard, soul-belter or pompous British rocker — Seal is actually a little of each. No one this side of Metallica has had such a multiplatinum morbid streak, constantly contemplating death on

With a Howl

Two discs of anguished anthems from the flannel superstars

PEARL JAM

REARVIEWMIRROR: GREATEST HITS 1991–2003 ★★

EPIC

DURING PEARL JAM'S early '90s heyday, Eddie Vedder was grunge's Bono: sensitive, principled and blessed with a gorgeous howl. But Vedder was also pathologically humble — good-bye, Bono comparison — and petrified by the millions of confused kids turning to him for answers. With 50 million albums sold, Pearl Jam represented alt-rock's breakthrough more than any other band.

But where Kurt Cobain, who first criticized Vedder as a sellout and later came to admire him, rode the contradictions between idealism and celebrity to suicide, Pearl Jam's frontman cautiously embraced the two, famously offering his home number to fans on a radio show, contributing songs to benefit CDs and waging a for-the-kids war against Ticketmaster.

This chronological retrospective starts off snarling. From 1991's *Ten*, the blistering "Once" follows a sociopath driving around with a gun and a prostitute. The rallying cry "Alive" imagines a survivor of mother-son incest, while "Jeremy" dives inside the head of an adolescent suicide. Vedder identified with outcasts of all shapes, but especially those unfortunate enough to live with their parents.

VEDDER NEVER LOST HIS SCRUPLES.

1993's lean, muscular Vs. offset the metal-tinged "Go" (from the perspective of a physically abusive man) with the acoustic guitar-driven "Daughter" (from that of an emotionally abused girl). Recorded just after Cobain's death, 1994's *Vitalogy* was a lashing-out ("Not for You"), a lament ("Immortality") and a letting-loose ("Spin the Black Circle" playfully turns a heroin ode into a vinyl ode).

Those last two songs show how Vedder matured without losing his scruples. On 1996's *No Code* and 1998's *Yield*, his writing expanded to include somber

"Dude, I'm telling you, these clothes are timeless."



self-examination ("Off He Goes"), irony ("Do the Evolution") and momentary elation ("Hail Hail"). The sonics turned weirder, too — where Cobain dressed in drag and kissed boys to test casual fans, Pearl Jam did their testing with chants, tribal rhythms and avant-garde rackets. By 2002, after Scott Stapp's histrionic

Vedder parody had taken Creed worldwide, Vedder had already dumped histrionics. Weary and sardonic, he got political on *Riot Act*, the band's lowest seller. For anyone else, the drop in sales might have hurt — for Vedder, it was probably validating.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Alive," "Daughter"

Sigur Rós
finally detonate
nuclear warhead.



the way to benevolent wishes. A one-disc version of *Best* is front-loaded with Seal's gutsy baritone riding Trevor Horn's deliriously overstuffed productions: orchestras, electronic swirls, funk, merry-go-round chorales, power chords, disco beats. Eventually, though, Horn repeats his tricks as Seal settles into generalized pleas for love, including a new remake of "Walk on By." The two-disc *Best* adds a CD of unplugged versions, and it's a trade-off: heartier, more intimate singing and some clever arrangements, but no wild metamorphoses to dilute Seal's unwavering earnestness.

JON PARELES

DOWNLOAD: "Kiss from a Rose," "Waiting for You"

SIGUR RÓS

VON ★★

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Debut album of Icelandic whale-song rockers from 1997

Sigur Rós's beautiful second album, 1999's *Ágætis byrjun*, earned support gigs with Radiohead and the 2001 Shortlist Prize, a kind of brainiac's Grammy, wowing judges with its billowing atmospheres and the castrato keening of singer Jón Pór Birgisson. Available for the first time in the U.S., their first (*Von* means *hope*) is slower into its stride, with tune-free twittering and dull homages to FX-pedal rock making up the first half. Then, as guitars make like mating humpbacks and

Birgisson unleashes his self-invented language (he calls it "Hopelandish") on the cobwebby "Syndir Guos," the band stops trying to be spiritualized and stumbles on something like a song. A magic moment presaging better records to come.

TONY POWER

DOWNLOAD THESE: "Syndir Guos," "Von"

TRAVIS

SINGLES ★★★

INDEPENDIENTE/EPIC

All the U.K. hits from mild-mannered, Coldplay-esque Scots

In 1999, Travis were briefly the biggest band in England. After a misleading start making teenage-kick romps with titles like "All I Want to Do Is Rock," they found their niche spinning bittersweet emotional truisms — anyone who can croon "the grass is always greener on the other side" as solemnly as Fran Healy does on "Side" clearly has no phobia of cliché. Although they worked a subtle magic on the quintessentially British "Why Does It Always Rain on Me?" — a drizzle of a lyric set to a warm breeze of a tune — and the luminous "Sing," they were suckers for trite sentiments and foot-dragging melodies. Next to Coldplay, who outgrew their initial billing as "the next Travis," Healy's crew sound crippling parochial.

DORIAN LYNKEY

DOWNLOAD: "Sing," "Why Does It Always Rain on Me?"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

GET DOWN TONIGHT: THE DISCO EXPLOSION ★★★★★

SHOUT! FACTORY

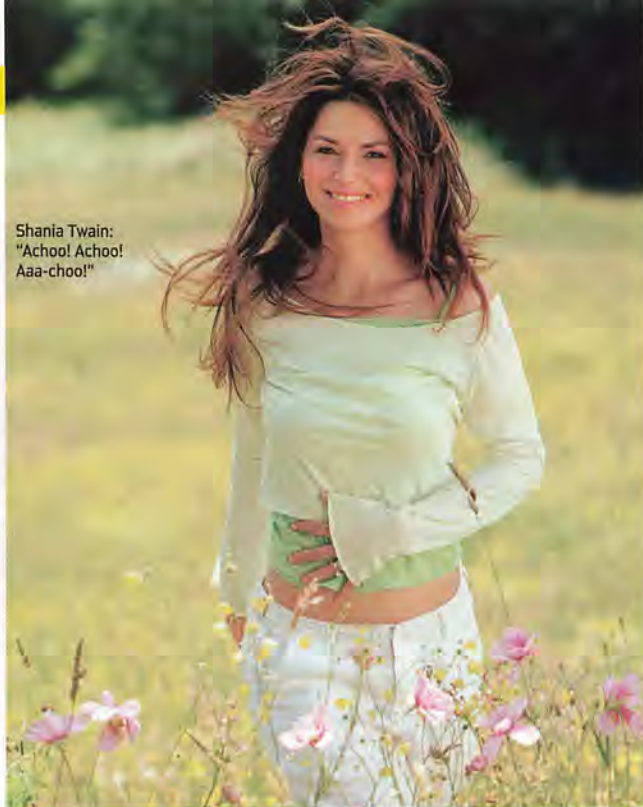
After 25 years, it's official: Disco does not suck

Has escapist pop ever generated a culture war like disco did? It's hard to say who emerges with less credit: the mulleted perpetrators of the "disco sucks" pogrom or today's pompous fundamentalists who sneer at Kool & the Gang in favor of some dreary 12-inch rarity. This triple CD set sidesteps both by taking the populist route — Chic, Weather Girls, Village People. That's OK because disco was the ultimate people's uprising, giving Americans of every hue access to the groove, the good life and a courageous trouser. Although disco anthologies abound, this one scores by sprinkling in less-obvious selections plus 12-inch versions of monsters like Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive." Campy, erotic, ecstatic and transcending hipness, it confirms that disco might just be the perfect music.

ANDREW HARRISON

DOWNLOAD: Donna Summer "Hot Stuff," Village People "Y.M.C.A."

Shania Twain:
"Achoo! Achoo!
Aaa-choo!"



Flower Power

Blockbuster hits set from the best pop singer since Madonna

SHANIA TWAIN

GREATEST HITS ★★★★★

MERCURY NASHVILLE

SHE CAME FROM Canada, had a first name no one could pronounce, and her first album was about as popular as a tax increase. Ten years ago, Shania Twain was no one's choice to conquer the country charts and then become the top-selling female singer of all time. So when it happened, much of the credit went to her belly button, which was photographed so often it could've had a solo career. But this spectacular compilation of her last three albums, plus four worthy new songs, shows Twain's real innovation: turning Southern music from the subject of divorces and funerals to weddings.

"I know I sound serious," she coos in "I'm Gonna Getcha Good!" which is the grandest deception since Madonna declared herself a material girl. Twain is a sentimentalist and her songs are silver linings — the alliteration and exclamation points are there to mark her flirty, goofy enthusiasm. The melodies are so luxurious, they're like 400-thread-count overalls, and the music lives in an untroubled world: "Up!" a

song title, is the only direction she knows, and her masterpiece ballad, "You're Still the One," regards marriage as one long honeymoon night.

But Twain also connects with more female listeners than any sex object ought to because she demands that her generosity be reciprocated with devotion: "Any man of mine better walk the line," she demands. She likes sex, but she also requires commitment, which is the most Nashville thing about her.

In her mission to fill country with impurities and fun, she's joined by her husband, producer and cowriter Mutt Lange, who had taken the Cars and Def Leppard to the top of the world. Twain is clearly a modern woman — she complains about PMS in "Honey, I'm Home" — and by adding new-wave drums and rock guitars, she crosses borders in a confusing and exciting way. If this music isn't country, what's with the fiddles and the songs about boots? And if it is country, why does the music sound best shouted from hockey arenas, not played on back porches?

ROB TANNENBAUM

DOWNLOAD THESE: "You're Still the One," "Any Man of Mine," "That Don't Impress Me Much"

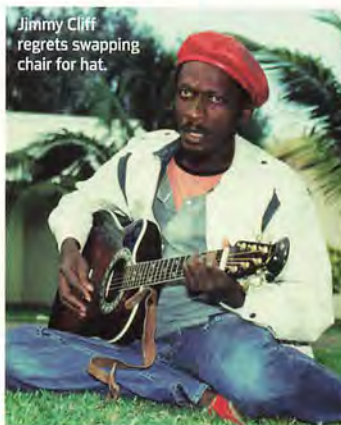
I LOVE THIS CD!



BILL GOLDBERG
PRO WRESTLER/ACTOR

NELLY SWEAT/SUIT
FO' REEL/UNIVERSAL

"Most new stuff doesn't work for me, but from an old white fogey's perspective, his two new CDs are pretty good party music."



Jimmy Cliff regrets swapping chair for hat.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

STRICTLY THE BEST: VOLUME 32 ★★★★★

VP

Jam-packed reggae comp revamps Nina Sky and crowns Sean Paul the crossover king

Compiling an annual reggae roundup is easier than bargain hunting at Costco. With so many options — a staggering number of independent singles are released in Jamaica each week, let alone each year — it's hard to go wrong. Whatever your preferred brand of reggae, you'll find it on this collection: fiery spiritual anthems (Sizzla's "Rise to the Occasion"); dancehall party jams (Nina Sky's "Move Ya Body," vastly upgraded by a tongue-twisting verse from Vybz Kartel); pleasingly cheesy covers (crooner Da'Ville's version of Bryan Adams's "Heaven"); dulcet lovers' rock (Cocoa Tea's "Tek Weh Yuh Gal"). And, for dancehall neophytes, crossover darling Sean Paul flaunts an alluring staccato flow on "We'll Be Burning," proving his poster-child status is well deserved.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: Sizzla "Rise to the Occasion," Richie Spence "Marijuana"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

THIS IS CRUCIAL REGGAE: JIMMY CLIFF ★★

THIS IS CRUCIAL REGGAE: DUB ★★★★★

THIS IS CRUCIAL REGGAE: J.C. LODGE ★★★★★

THIS IS CRUCIAL REGGAE: SKA ★★

THIS IS CRUCIAL REGGAE: TOOTS & THE MAYTALS ★★★★★

TROJAN/SANCTUARY

Budget introductions to major reggae artists cut some corners

This new budget-priced CD line exploring the biggest stars and styles from Trojan Records' vast reggae vaults was obviously put



We think Neil Young's the one on the right.

together quickly and cheaply — with haphazard track selections (a skimpy 12 on each disc) and liner notes that don't even indicate when songs were recorded, they're meant as tasters for the curious. Of the initial 11 titles, the most surprising is the *Dub*

disc — other than Augustus Pablo's warhorse "King Tubby Meets Rockers Uptown," it's essentially a personal mix CD of fabulous '70s dub obscurities. *Ska* is a messier selection of familiar, horn-driven mid-'60s hits, with a few oddities like 15-year-old

BLENDER APPROVED

The best REISSUES of the last few months



THE GO-BETWEENS TALLULAH

JETSET

The lush Aussie folk-poppers were never more than cult faves here, but this newly expanded masterpiece shows their shy, stumbling appeal.



PAVEMENT CROOKED RAIN, CROOKED RAIN: L.A.'S DESERT ORIGINS

MATADOR

With this deluge of rarities, the poet laureates of slacker rock prove they weren't such slackers after all.



GEORGE JONES 50 YEARS OF HITS

BANDIT

The Nashville legend marks his golden anniversary with this three-disc best-of: 50 songs — one per year — and not a dud among them.



BRITNEY SPEARS GREATEST HITS: MY PREROGATIVE

JIVE

From schoolgirl to "Slave 4 U," the ex-Mousketeer who, for better or worse, defined a generation.

Jimmy Cliff's "Miss Jamaica." Cliff's own disc, drawn entirely from '60s and early '70s sessions produced by Leslie Kong, highlights his barbed songwriting, although it jumps around jarringly in time and style. If you have any other Toots & the Maytals greatest hits, you've heard most or all of this disc; if you haven't, the late-'60s singles are some of the happiest and most tuneful in all of reggae. And J.C. Lodge would probably have been better served by a four-song EP, but her volume is the closest thing the mellow-voiced soprano behind 1988's dancehall hit "Telephone Love" has to a best-of.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: Jimmy Cliff "Vietnam," King Tubby & the Aggrovators "Blood Dunza Version," J.C. Lodge "Telephone Love," The Skatalites "Guns of Navarone," Toots and the Maytals "Monkey Man"

NEIL YOUNG

GREATEST HITS ★★★★★

REPRISE

The ragged-glory story, collected in one concise volume for the first time

No rock star combines singer-songwriter sensitivity and mook-headed guitar worship quite like Neil Young. He veers from unaffected country to mind-warp psychedelia, from waif-like folk to testosterone metal; his lyrics can be maddeningly cryptic or disarmingly direct. This package captures both poles. On his louder-than-loud side, there's "Down by the River," "Like a Hurricane" and "Cowgirl in the Sand"; for a mellow mood, it's "Old Man," "Comes a Time" or "Only Love Can Break Your Heart." Everything's familiar, but new details reveal themselves: the subtle tempo fluctuations in "Cinnamon Girl," the broom sweeping across "Harvest Moon." It's impressive that one musician covered such a wide terrain — even more so that he's remained enthralling at every turn.

KAREN SCHOEMER

DOWNLOAD: "Cinnamon Girl," "Cowgirl in the Sand," "Harvest Moon"

I LOVE THIS CD!



NIA LONG
ACTRESS IN ALFIE
BOYZ N THE HOOD

JILL SCOTT
BEAUTIFULLY
HUMAN: WORDS &
SOUNDS 2
HIDDEN BEACH/A TOUCH OF
JAZZ, INC.

"Her voice is soothing. When I gave birth to my son, her first CD was playing. So I'm a fan forever."

REISSUES IN BRIEF BY JON YOUNG



Robert "Percy" Plant and Jimmy "Nasty Scarf" Page.

THE BUTTERFIELD BLUES BAND

LIVE ★★

RHINO HANDMADE

By 1970, harmonica virtuoso Paul Butterfield had strayed from his roots in gritty Chicago blues, employing a jazzy horn section that overshadowed his own fiery blowing. Highlights include the funky "No Amount of Loving" and an unreleased take on Otis Redding's "Nobody's Fault But Mine."

RODNEY CROWELL

THE ESSENTIAL RODNEY CROWELL
★★★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Country-rocker Crowell has been covered by Bob Seger and Emmylou Harris, but his stories of desperate living are best suited to his own yearning voice. Along with gems like "Til I Gain Control Again," be sure not to miss "I Walk the Line Revisited," a stirring salute to Johnny Cash costarring the Man in Black himself.

SAMMY DAVIS, JR./BUDDY RICH

THE SOUNDS OF '66 ★★

COLLECTORS' CHOICE

Cut in the wee hours of a Vegas morning, this nerve-fraying live set teams Rat Pack shouter Davis with bombastic drummer Rich and his big band. The bludgeoning "What Kind of Fool Am I?" and "Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead" will frighten small children and the elderly.



Placebo, "amazed" Robert Plant is still alive.

ROGER MCGUINN

CARDIFF ROSE ★★★★★

SUNDazed

Fresh off Dylan's rowdy Rolling Thunder tour, McGuinn uncorked his liveliest solo work in 1976. Produced by Bowie guitarist Mick Ronson, the Byrds icon gets punky on "Rock and Roll Time" and tackles Bowie's glam classic "Soul Love," though the Dylan obscurity "Up to Me" returns him to familiar folk-rock turf.

MISSION OF BURMA

A GUN TO THE HEAD ★★★★★

RYKODISC

The recently reformed Boston band attained greatness with these late-'70s and early-'80s tracks. Grounded in punk, yet far shifter, the churning noise of "That's When I Reach for My Revolver" (covered by Moby) and "Trem Two" depict a thrilling tug-of-war between order and chaos that could make weaker heads explode.

JIMMY PAGE AND ROBERT PLANT

NO QUARTER: UNLEDD ★★★★★

ATLANTIC

Reuniting in '94, Page and Plant spotlighted the influences that made Led Zeppelin more than a loud blues band, tossing an orchestra and Middle Eastern players into the largely acoustic mix. If the updated "Kashmir" and "Gallows Pole" don't supplant the originals, they're still gripping efforts — not cheesy retros.

PLACEBO

ONCE MORE WITH FEELING: SINGLES 1996-2004 ★★★★★

ASTRALWERKS

Endorsed by David Bowie (who appears on the haunting "Without You I'm Nothing"), the British-based trio showcases reedy-voiced Brian Molko's sexual anxieties. Although he's twitchy to the point of annoying, the jagged guitars of "Nancy Boy" and "Taste in Men" can cause a tingle in the right places.

the verve

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CONTAINS 14 TRACKS INCLUDING 2 UNRELEASED SONGS FROM THE URBAN HYMNS SESSIONS. A COLLECTION OF ALL THEIR BEST FEATURING: "HISTORY," "LUCKY MAN," "THE DRUGS DON'T WORK," AND "BITTERSWEET SYMPHONY."

IN STORES NOW Also on DVD

Virgin

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Destiny's Child appears courtesy of Columbia Records
© 2004 Until There's A Cure Foundation Photo: Heward Jue

ABBA

Swedish ambassadors of sleek pop were fraught with marital disharmony.

By Douglas Wolk

SINGERS AGNETHA FÄLTSKOG and Anni-Frid (Frida) Lyngstad and songwriters Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson were pop stars in '60s Sweden. Agnetha and Björn fell in love, Frida and Benny did too, and in the early '70s, they began to record as a supergroup, named after their first initials. ABBA's string of hits, driven by the As' cabaret-honed voices and the Bs' studio craft, made the world safe for Swedish accents, impossibly rich harmonies and god-awful fashion disasters. By the time they disbanded in 1982, both couples had divorced, and their later records have a haunting sadness that belies the band's reputation for goofy camp.

Lately, Benny and Björn have devoted themselves to musical theater — their biggest success is *Mamma Mia*, a Broadway show written around old ABBA songs. Despite their global popularity, there's one thing they've never backed down on. Björn calls ABBA "the group that never came back"; in 1999, they were offered \$1 billion to reunite, and turned it down.

ESSENTIAL

VOULEZ-VOUS POLYDOR, 1979

★★★★★



The rise of disco was a godsend for ABBA, who here harnessed their melodic gifts to the funkier grooves they ever achieved, especially on the

pounding title track, recorded with members of the Miami disco band Foxy. Their sixth album's sessions dragged on for a year (during which time Benny and Frida finally tied the knot and Björn and Agnetha split up), and yielded seven global hits. Even Björn got to sing one, "Does Your Mother Know."

Download: "Voulez-Vous," "Summer Night City," "As Good As New"

THE VISITORS POLYDOR, 1981

★★★★★



The last album ABBA completed is a smooth, tuneful new-wave record about horrible emotional agony. Frida and Benny announced their

own divorce shortly before recording began, and terror and loss are all over the lyrics: The album begins with Agnetha expecting soldiers to kick in her door. ABBA stripped down their grand arrangements, too — the exquisite farewell "Like an Angel Passing Through My Room" isn't much more than Frida's naked voice and a ticking clock. The CD appends their paranoid final singles, recorded the next year.

Download: "The Visitors," "The Day Before You Came," "One Of Us"

ABBA GOLD POLYDOR, 1992

★★★★★



Their umpteenth stab at a greatest-hits got it exactly right: 19 glorious tunes in perfect sequence. It skips their debut, *Ring, Ring*, altogether and

omits overseas hits like "Summer Night City," but so what? Pop music doesn't have to be fair. *Gold* has sold over 25 million copies, single-handedly revived ABBA's international fame and set the standard for best-ofs — Asian bootleggers now put its cover's gold-crown logo on every artist's greatest hits.

Download: "Dancing Queen," "Waterloo," "Super Trouper"

GREAT

WATERLOO POLYDOR, 1974

★★★★★



ABBA's "Waterloo" was the irresistible winner of the 1974 Eurovision Song Contest and their first worldwide hit. The LP suggests Benny and Björn

hadn't quite worked out the band's aesthetic yet — "Watch Out" is a bizarre, glammy stab at hard rock, "My Mama Said" is a low-key soul-jazz groover — and their English was lacking ("I have met my destiny in quite a similar way"). What they did have were tunes, hooks, and Beach Boys/Phil Spector/Beatles-inspired production tricks that lunge out of the speakers.

Download: "Honey Honey," "Suzy-Hang-Around," "My Mama Said"

SUPER TROUPER POLYDOR, 1980

★★★★★



Unmistakably nearing the end of the line, ABBA were tapping into the power of the dark side: The title track is an anthem about being sick of show

business, and Agnetha rips her heart out on "The Winner Takes It All," which Björn wrote about their divorce. But there's a lot of joy here, too: The synthesizer-driven arrangements are feather-light (the next 20 years of Europop took them as a starting point), and even the minor-key jealous rage of "Lay All Your Love On Me" sounds like a good time.

Download: "Lay All Your Love On Me," "The Winner Takes It All," "On and On and On"

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

POLYDOR, 1994

★★★★★



A career-spanning, well-annotated box set with all the ABBA most people need. The first three discs include hits, album tracks and B-sides; the fourth is all rarities,

including a long, bizarre medley of incomplete song fragments and early takes. It's not their most listenable, but it gives remarkable insight into the grueling trial-and-error process behind their records' perfectly buffed surfaces.

Download: "Dream World," "Elaine," "Hej Gamle Man!"

EVERY
ORIGINAL
CD
REVIEWED

ABBA, from left: Benny Andersson, Anni-Frid Lyngstad, Agnetha Fältskog and Björn Ulvaeus



Note: Not all of the "Download these" songs are legally available for download — yet, in those instances, Blender encourages you to purchase the original CD. This page: Peter Mazell/Sunshine/Retna Ltd.

CHECK IT OUT

ABBA POLYDOR, 1975
★★★



Hungry to be known as more than a one-hit wonder, ABBA turned the "bombast" dial all the way up for their third LP; they could already make even

trifles like "Bang-A-Boomerang" sound like a galloping horde. When the album works, on hits like "SOS" (a *tour de force* for Agnetha, who sounds genuinely abject) and "Mamma Mia," it's aggressively catchy and imaginatively recorded; when it doesn't, it's just aggressive. **Download:** "SOS," "I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do"

ARRIVAL POLYDOR, 1976
★★★



Already superstars in Australia, ABBA solidified their rep with a series of stylistically varied singles — Frida cried with happiness the first time

she heard the backing track for "Dancing Queen." But the theatrical characters Agnetha and Frida portray on "Money, Money, Money," "That's Me" and the panpipe-tinged torch song "Fernando" (originally a Swedish-language Frida solo single) pointed toward the stage as the future of ABBA's songwriters — and their repertoire. **Download:** "Knowing Me, Knowing You," "When I Kissed the Teacher"

ABBA: THE ALBUM POLYDOR, 1977
★★★



Benny and Björn were always interested in theater, and ABBA's 1977 tour incorporated a four-song "mini-musical," "The Girl with the Golden

Hair," most of which ended up here. *The Album* (a tie-in with *ABBA: The Movie*) features too many emotive Euroballads, as well as an unconvincing ode to rock & roll. Still, a couple of the slow ones are swoon-worthy, and the delightful "Take a Chance On Me" has a brilliant arrangement that layers the group's voices mountain-high. **Download:** "Take a Chance On Me," "The Name of the Game"

BE CAREFUL

RING RING POLYDOR, 1973
★★



Initially credited to the mouth-cramming name "Björn & Benny, Agnetha & Frida" — manager Stig Anderson hadn't come up with the acronym

yet—the first ABBA album was slapped together to capitalize on the fabulous "Ring Ring," which was simultaneously number 1 and number 2 on the Swedish charts (in two languages). The rest is interesting mostly for its hints of future greatness: clever production and music-hall-influenced songwriting. **Download:** "Ring Ring"

CHESS (ORIGINAL CAST RECORDING) DECCA, 1984
★★



As ABBA dissolved, Björn and Benny threw themselves into writing a musical about international chess champions, collaborating with

Broadway lyricist Tim Rice. Recorded before the show had ever actually been staged, the *Chess* soundtrack has aged more awkwardly than ABBA's own records, but it spawned two surprise hits: Murray Head's disco-rapping "One Night In Bangkok" and the weepy Elaine Paige/Barbara Dickson power ballad "I Know Him So Well." **Download:** "One Night In Bangkok"

THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION UTI, 2001
★★



Yet another compilation, this one baited with slightly tweaked remixes of "Ring Ring" and "Voulez-Vous." The DVD of the same name at least

includes *Chocolat* director Lasse Hallström's gaudy, low-budget videos for most of ABBA's hits; this is just the same old standards, in a chronological order that's much less listenable than *Gold* (all of which it includes). Docked a star for total redundancy. **Download:** "Angeleyes"

FOR FANS ONLY

ABBA LIVE POLYDOR, 1986
★



ABBA made their reputation as studio obsessives, not live freewheelers, and this set, cobbled together from 1977, 1979 and 1981 perfor-

mances with extensive studio touching-up, is seriously unnecessary: near-identical reproductions of their big hits, with echo and crowd noise dumped onto the mix. You can't even see their ridiculous costumes — what fun is that? If you must experience their stage act, try the *In Concert* DVD. **Download:** "Thank You for the Music"

ORO: GRANDES EXITOS POLYDOR, 1999
★



Their records had been hits everywhere except Latin America, so Agnetha and Frida dubbed new Spanish vocals over a handful of old

hits in 1980 for an album called *Gracias por la Música*, and later a few others. But they were even more at sea with Spanish than with English, and Benny and Björn didn't bother to fine-tune the vocal arrangements and mixes as they'd done with the originals. **Download:** "Chiquitita"

MAMMA MIA! (ORIGINAL CAST RECORDING) DECCA, 2000
★



Chess never quite took off, and their four-hour Swedish musical *Kristina Fran Duvemala* failed to set the world on fire, but Benny and Björn

cashed in with this ultra-cheesy ABBA-revue-plus-a-plot, a global hit despite the chintzy arrangements and uninspired performances documented here, and directly responsible for the current plague of classic-rock musicals. If you've heard the original version of any of these songs, you've heard a better version. **Download:** "Slipping Through My Fingers"

FURTHER LISTENING

ERASURE ABBA-ESQUE ELEKTRA, 1992
★★★

Gay, British synth-pop duo's lightweight but charming EP of covers, honoring both ABBA's disco genius and their campiness. ABBA tribute band Björn Again later returned the favor with *Erasure-Ish*. **Download:** "Take a Chance on Me"

A*TEENS THE ABBA GENERATION MCA, 2000
★★★

Photogenic Swedish kids remake ABBA hits with slicked-up, TRL-ified production: a misbegotten idea, but also weirdly satisfying. And ABBA *did* anticipate teen-pop. **Download:** "One of Us," "Our Last Summer"

FURTHER VIEWING

ABBA IN CONCERT POLYDOR, 2004
★★★

A blurry but lively 1979 film of the *Voulez-Vous* tour, mostly shot in England. They've got retina-scarring outfits and hairdos, a children's choir and plenty of enthusiasm.

Dylan: "'Oops, I did it again' . . . Hey, who switched the lyric sheet?"

NO TWO DYLAN SHOWS ARE EVER ALIKE

NO TWO DYLAN SHOWS ARE EVER ALIKE

The Portable Dylan

From night to night, rock's greatest songwriter revises his story

BOB DYLAN

**PETERSEN EVENTS
CENTER, PITTSBURGH**

NOVEMBER 7, 2004 ★★★★★

THE ONLY THING you can count on with Bob Dylan is that he's never predictable. So the first surprise tonight comes even before he appears onstage.

In his recently published memoir, *Chronicles: Volume One*, he rails against being anointed the "High Priest of Protest," so it's odd to hear an announcer introduce him as "the voice of the '60s counterculture." Dylan takes the stage, decked out in a cowboy hat, ambles to stage right, leans into the microphone at an angle that looks like it would kill a 63-year-old's back

and begins to hammer away at an electric keyboard.

Loyal Dylan fans are used to this surprise; he's played keyboards exclusively onstage since early 2004. In fact, Dylan's been confounding expectations since his first album in 1962. But some of the 4,000-plus crowd at this University of Pittsburgh concert — students, tie-dyed Phish refugees, fiftysomethings, even an elderly woman whose companion is lugging an oxygen tank — must be puzzled. The man who practically invented modern rock & roll is performing without a guitar?

As Dylan explains to *Blender*, "When I play guitar, I can't find the bottom that I need to hear. I don't do much with the keyboards except stay with the

drum, which is what I do with the guitar. But I can play fuller on the keyboards."

In concert, Dylan is more like a jazz musician improvising than a rock star replicating hits with added lights and videos.

No two shows are alike, and since the set list shifts nightly, the pleasure comes from hearing his latest rethinking of classic songs, or finding out which obscurities are resurfacing in his memory now. He changes tempos, arrangements, melodies, meanings and even the phrasing of lyrics that have entered our collective

consciousness. His voice has grown deeper and grainier, and he may shift from a whispery growl to a croon. Essentially, you're listening to him *think*, and you hang on for dear life.

The show kicks off with an old standby, the galumphing "Rainy Day Women #12 and 35," slightly reworded (does he really sing "They'll stone you like you got hit by a duck"?). Then

Dylan moves, as usual, through the familiar and unfamiliar, including all four of his top 10 singles, as well as 1990's long-forgotten "God Knows."

Except nothing is quite usual — as usual. Dylan reconfigures even his most recent songs.

PITTSBURGH, NOV. 7
RAINY DAY WOMEN #12 & 35
FOOD KNIVES
EYES AND RYE
EYES, LALUNE, MA
(74) OOD BLESSEDING)
LAY LASS WATER
KISS (KISS PATTION)
(FOR CHAIR, THREE
POSSIBLY TWO, THREE
WATCHING THE RIVER CLOW
CAN'T WAIT
DON'T THINK TWICE, I'VE ALL RIGHT
HONEST WITH ME
SUGAR BABY (ACOUSTIC)
SUMMER DAYS
(ENCORE)
LIVE A ROLLING STONE
ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER

"High Water," from *Love and Theft*, has lost the bluegrass banjo in favor of a '70s funk groove with dark, gritty guitars — a better fit for its apocalyptic lyrics. Conversely, the great 2001 album's devastating closing song, "Sugar Baby," has been kicked up from a dirge to a mild swing-era lope, and its rueful address to the woman who "went years without me" and "might as well keep goin' now" is laced with bitterness and sly resilience. Suddenly you hear the comic possibilities in a song you thought was a total wrist-slitter. The crowd seems to agree that this is something special: For this song, they're raptly silent.

And his older songs have been so radically transformed that it's sometimes hard to tell what he's playing: "Like a Rolling Stone" has become a stately, steel-guitar-drenched lament, whose old prophetic challenge ("Nobody ever taught you how to live out on the street/And now you're gonna have to get used to it") has lost any vestige of contempt in favor of compassion.

He takes a similarly gentle approach to "Positively 4th Street" — this demolition of a backstabbing Village hanger-on is Dylan's harshest song ever — structuring his vocals around a repeated feathery high note that works artfully against the words. And "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," whose original 1965 version is accompanied only by acoustic guitar, is now a menacing minor-key slouch for his five-piece band, with Dylan spitting out the elaborate lyrics in quick, intense bursts.

One thing hasn't changed: The line "even the president of the United States sometimes must have to stand naked" has held on to its accusatory meaning, from Vietnam to Watergate to Iran-Contra to Monicagate to the Bush administration. Just five days after the presidential election, it gets the audience cheering and hooting. Dylan may repudiate the title, but as long as he's playing these assertive, confrontational, enduring songs and filling them with restless changes, he'll remain the voice of the '60s counterculture.

DAVID GATES



Armstrong would regret huffing so much helium.

EAT OUR SHORTS, GOOD CHARLOTTE!

Idiotic!

Bunny costumes, Super Soakers and guy-guy kisses: Happy Halloween from pop-punk's elder statesmen

GREEN DAY

PATRIOT CENTER, FAIRFAX, VA

OCTOBER 31, 2004 ★★★★★

WRITING A ROCK OPERA — like recording a duets album or baring your breast at the Super Bowl — is usually a sign of career desperation. But, after 15 years and seven albums, not very much is usual about Green Day. For example, it *should* be safe to expect their concerts to be packed with nostalgic Gen Xers. But the girl sitting next to *Blender* who hisses, "Tsk, kids today!" is barely 22 herself.

Tonight, the Patriot Center is jammed with screaming teens who were in kindergarten when Green Day broke big with *Dookie* in 1994. A gaggle of gawky girls who look more suited to Live Journals than live shows nearly burst out of their Simple Plan T-shirts and pleather stud-ded belts with excitement.

And why not? Even though singer-guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong, bassist Mike Dirnt and drummer Tre Cool are all dads on the far side of 30, they've always prided themselves on being juvenile — their first hit, "Longview," which

tonight receives the loudest roar, is about whacking off to bad cable TV. And while their chart-topping new album, *American Idiot*, is a rock opera, it chronicles the same shiftless suburban lives as always, only with a newfound wisdom and ambition.

Any fears that Green Day have lost their punk vanish quickly. As "Y.M.C.A." blares, an unidentified man in a pink bunny suit emerges to pump up the crowd. Armstrong is wearing a George W. Bush mask and a red devil's tail. Tre Cool is done up like Benji Madden from *Good Charlotte*. Dirnt is still the coolest man in rock and therefore does not wear a costume.



Billie Joe has the best tail in punk rock.

The first three songs are the first three from the new record, and while they're plenty political, they're also dizzyingly catchy, and the crowd sings every word. While Green Day may be punks, they're also rock-star vets: Their songs don't simply end — they're linked with extended jams, jokes and audience call-and-response games. During a cover of Operation Ivy's "Knowledge," three fans are pulled onstage. The diminutive Armstrong blows kisses, mimes masturbation and kisses a male fan on the lips. And that's all before bringing out the Super Soaker for "Brainstew."

Two hours later, Green Day finish strong with the haunting new fan-favorite "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" and a straight-faced, surprisingly moving cover of Queen's "We Are the Champions." Before a closing solo of "Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)," Armstrong finally sounds like a dad when he tells the audience to vote: "Don't let these old motherfuckers determine your future!" Fifteen years in and no need for a recount — Green Day are still one of the best live shows in rock.

ANDY GREENWALD

"I said I was sorry about the *Matrix* sequels, OK?"

THE GOOD!

HELL, YEAH!

Keanu battles demons and (cough) lung cancer in comic-book adaptation. By Clark Collis

CONSTANTINE

DIRECTED BY Francis Lawrence

STARRING Keanu Reeves, Rachel Weisz, Shia LaBeouf, Gavin Rossdale

"ORIGINALLY, THE STUDIO thought the movie should be like *Men In Black*," says director Francis Lawrence prior to screening for *Blender* some freshly edited suite sequences from his horror-thriller *Constantine*. "But we went a darker way."

He can say that again. The footage finds star Keanu Reeves

messing around with an electric chair, visiting an unpleasant-looking hell and vomiting blood. The reason for the latter is that Reeves's character, supernatural investigator and chain-smoker John Constantine, has lung cancer. This is doubly unfortunate given that the morally ambiguous Constantine already knows he's headed for an eternity in the place where heated blankets are not required. As the Archangel Gabriel informs him, Constantine is "fucked", and, says Lawrence, the film deals with his

desperate attempts to reverse that situation.

"There were moments when the studio was, like, 'Does the hero have to be dying of lung cancer?'" says Lawrence, a first-time director previously responsible for numerous music videos including Aerosmith's "Jaded." "A lot of what is unique to this movie was scary for them at first. But now they've really embraced it."

Constantine was originally a blond, grizzled Brit who appeared in the pages of the comic book *Swamp Thing* before graduating to his own title, *Hellraiser*. And some comic fans have been less than pleased with his Hollywood metamorphosis into the fresh-faced American Reeves. One was even moved to post on the Ain't It Cool News film website that the project proved that Warners, the studio responsible, "fucking sucks monkey tits."

Unsurprisingly, Lawrence takes a different view. "I understand why it pisses them off," he says. "But the comic fans who have seen the footage really

don't think it's a sellout, like other comic-book films have been."

Certainly, the finished scenes are impressive: part *Matrix*, part *Exorcist*,

and with enough spectacular effects to justify what Lawrence admits is a "close to \$100-million" price tag. In any case, the director can't be blamed for all of the changes in the character, particularly the fact that he smokes a made-up brand of cigarettes, Chang Jangs, instead of the U.K. brand Silk Cut.

"Yeah, we didn't try to get any kind of product-placement deal on that," he says. "Imagine the pitch: 'Hey, wouldn't you like this guy who's dying of lung cancer to be seen smoking your brand?' I don't think anyone would have jumped at the opportunity."

FANS DON'T THINK IT'S A SELLOUT.



"Ten bucks if you get him to say 'dude.'"



THE BAD!

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

DIRECTED BY Joel Schumacher

STARRING Gerard Butler, Minnie Driver

For this month's "Bad," *Blender* was tempted to nominate *Schultze Gets the Blues*, about a recently unemployed, middle-aged accordion player. But even two hours of Teutonic folk music sounds preferable to sitting through this big screen adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical. A turgid affair in the first place, Webber's take on the disfigured-musical-genius-who-lives-in-an-opera-house yarn is directed by Joel Schumacher. And as the man behind *8mm*, *Bad Company* and the unspeakably rank *Batman & Robin*, Schumacher has probably been responsible for more of planet Earth's collective wasted hours than anyone else in history.



& THE INDIE!

THE ASSASSINATION OF RICHARD NIXON

DIRECTED BY Niels Mueller

STARRING Sean Penn, Naomi Watts, Don Cheadle

Inspired by a true story, *Assassination* stars Sean Penn as a man who decides to hijack a plane and fly it into the White House. Sound familiar? Effectively, first-time director Niels Mueller argues that it would be a mistake not to at least try to examine why the 9/11 terrorists did what they did. Whether you agree or not, there is no doubting Penn's brilliance as he simultaneously channels Willy Loman, downtrodden hero of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, and, as the movie darkens, *Taxi Driver*'s deranged Travis Bickle.

BLENDER APPROVED

The best FILMS of the past few months



THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU

BUENA VISTA

Just like *The Royal Tenenbaums* — but on (and under) water.



OCEAN'S TWELVE

WARNER BROS.

Clooney and Pitt reteam for more heists and great hair days.

AND THE REST...



ARE WE THERE YET?

DIRECTED BY Brian Levant

STARRING Ice Cube, Nia Long, Jay Mohr

THE PITCH Cube must drive his girlfriend's two kids from Washington, D.C., to New York. But — aha! — the kids don't like him.

THE VERDICT Sounds like the result of a bet Cube made that he could turn any premise, no matter how lame, into comedy gold. More remarkable? Judging by the trailer, it's a bet he could actually win.



COACH CARTER

DIRECTED BY Thomas Carter

STARRING Samuel L. Jackson, Ashanti

THE PITCH Inner-city basketball coach benches his team for its poor academic performance. Based on a true story.

THE VERDICT SLJ can do this kind of thing standing on his head, and it's a comforting thought that at least *someone* cares if ballers are numerate enough to know what "I'm seven feet, four inches tall" means.



THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

DIRECTED BY Michael Radford

STARRING Al Pacino, Joseph Fiennes

THE PITCH "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? Hoo-ha!" Al Pacino is Shylock in this take on Shakespeare's brilliant, if anti-Semitic play.

THE VERDICT Pacino's star wattage — and a plot that involves cross-dressing lawyers and homicidal loan sharks — should make it eminently more enjoyable than English lit.

DON'T MISS



IN GOOD COMPANY

DIRECTED BY Paul Weitz

STARRING Dennis Quaid, Topher Grace, Scarlett Johansson

THE PITCH Quaid is an ad exec whose new boss, Grace, is sleeping with his daughter. See, Dennis, worse things can happen than your wife screwing Russell Crowe!

THE VERDICT Looks promising thanks to a great cast and director Weitz, responsible for *American Pie* and *About a Boy*.



ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

DIRECTED BY Jean-François Richet

STARRING Ethan Hawke, Maria Bello

THE PITCH An armed gang lays siege to a police station in this remake of John Carpenter's homage to *Rio Bravo* (itself a response to *High Noon*). Pay attention, there will be a test later.

THE VERDICT Should improve on the zero-budgeted original's action sequences, if not its still-classic, hard-boiled dialogue.

DON'T RUSH



FAT ALBERT

DIRECTED BY Joel Zwick

STARRING Kenan Thompson, Kyla Pratt

THE PITCH Hey, hey, hey! *SNL*'s Thompson plays the titular lard-ass in this version of the '70s cartoon show.

THE VERDICT Anyone out there going, "At last! A Fat Albert movie"? Didn't think so. Then again, maybe the film will finally reveal whether the poor bastard has got, you know, a thyroid condition, or whatever.

Al Pacino (Phantom of the Opera); Phil Bray (The Assassination of Richard Nixon); Fredrik Sandberg/SCANPIX/Retna Ltd. (Glen Danzig); Darren Michaels (Fat Albert); Michael Gibson (Assault on Precinct 13); Glen Wilson (In Good Company); Courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics (Merchant of Venice); Tracy Bennett (Coach Carter); Rob McEwan (Are We There Yet?)

"This is the worst conjugal visit ever!"



STONE FACED

From the auteur behind *Dude, Where's My Car?*, an interracial quest for ganja and burgers. By Clark Collis

HAROLD & KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE

DIRECTED BY Danny Leiner

STARRING: John Cho, Kal Penn, Neil Patrick Harris, Fred Willard

NEW LINE HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★

LAST YEAR, Mexican-American stoner icon Cheech Marin told *Blender* he hadn't seen *Dude, Where's My Car?*, the movie that up to that point had come closest to channeling the spirit of the *Cheech and Chong* films. "I heard it was funny, though," he admitted, before securing 2003's Back-handed Compliment Award by adding, "It's probably as funny as white guys can be, you know?"

Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle finds *Dude* director Danny Leiner repeating the two-friends-get-high-and-have-crazy-adventures formula of his previous film. But, this time around, Ashton Kutcher and Seann William Scott have been replaced by, as the trailer says, "that Asian guy from *American Pie*" and "that Indian guy from

Van Wilder." And Cheech would doubtless be pleased to know that it is funnier than its predecessor. Credit must go to the script, which exceeds even *Dude*'s surreal narco-lunacy by featuring a man being given head by a huge bag of grass and the sight of Neil Patrick Harris (playing himself) snorting coke off a stripper's butt — and admitting that he "humped every piece of ass ever" as Doogie Howser, MD.

But equal credit must go to stars John Cho and, in particular, the hugely likeable Kal Penn,

who leads the pair's increasingly demented quest for White Castle's meaty cuboid snacks. Having the lead pair be non-white also allows

the film to throw in some worthwhile points about racism, making it probably the first social polemic to include the lines "I'm fucking hungry as balls" and "Who wants the first reach-around?"

Every inch a worthy successor to the oeuvre of Messrs Cheech and Chong, *Harold & Kumar* is also a film that will have viewers, chemically altered or otherwise, posing the question: *Dude, where's my sequel?*

A DEMENTED QUEST FOR SNACKS

THE GUIDE DVDs

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★

It's always fun to daydream about no-holds-barred smackdowns between our pop-culture icons. *Batman versus Superman*. *Spider-Man versus Wolverine*. *Jenna Jameson versus Pamela Anderson*. Much more fun, in fact, than this film, which features little actual fighting between moviedom's most feared extraterrestrial menaces and even less in the way of characterization or believable plot. Also, to have the *Alien* aliens finally turning up on Earth only to restrict them to some remote frozen pyramid (don't ask) could not be more inexplicable. To bowdlerize the movie's tag line: Whoever wins — we still think it sucks.

ANCHORMAN

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME VIDEO

★★★★

If not quite as funny as the trailers led us to hope, this mixture of very stupid and very weird finds Will Ferrell in top form as chauvinistic scotch-guzzling '70s newsman Ron Burgundy. But the film is almost stolen from him by Steve Carell's



The Bourne Supremacy: "Buckle up for safety, kids!"

mentally retarded weatherman Brick Tamland, a grown-up version of *The Simpsons*' Ralph Wiggum ("I ate fiberglass insulation. It wasn't cotton candy like the guy said . . . My tummy itches.") Elsewhere, Christina Applegate gamely tries to keep a straight face as Will Ferrell's rival-cum-love-interest, and naturally, the phrase "whale's vagina" also plays a part.

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME VIDEO

★★★★

Matt Damon is clearly a bright guy off screen, but there is something about the camera that makes him look like he's undergone a recent and massively botched lobotomy. Of course, this is actually an advantage in playing spy Jason Bourne, who probably knows 117 different ways to kill people with phlegm but has a somewhat limited interior life thanks to his amnesia. On the other hand, Bourne's exterior life in this second franchise entry couldn't be fuller as Damon sets about avenging the death of his girlfriend in time-honored murder-, mayhem- and multiple-car-crash-oriented fashion.

COLLATERAL

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME VIDEO

★★★★

If you can overlook the ludicrousness of both the plot's basic premise and Tom Cruise's bizarre iron filing hairdo, *Collateral* stands as a visually dazzling noir flick and love letter to after-dark L.A. Cruise is the visiting hitman with a *Kill Bill*-esque list of whackees, while Jamie Foxx is the cab driver he forces to help him who learns some important lessons along the way — mostly don't pick up freakin' hitmen! Includes deleted scenes, documentary and footage of the two principals rehearsing.



Anchorman: Further proof white men can't jump.



Milla Jovovich:
"Eat lead, zombie
scum... and buy
L'Oréal mascara!"

EXORCIST: THE BEGINNING

WARNER HOME VIDEO

★★

While Finnish director Renny Harlin doesn't actually show Hell in *Exorcist: The Beginning*, he does give audiences a taste of what an eternity of torment is like. The usually great Stellan Skarsgård wildly overacts as Father Merrin, sent to Africa to investigate an unearthed church. Pretty much everything in the film offers proof that, while English doesn't have to be the first language of director and star, it should probably be the mother tongue of one of them.

PEE-WEE'S PLAYHOUSE VOLS. 1 & 2

IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★

Paul Reubens's onanistic criminal history notwithstanding, his demonic '80s creation Pee-wee Herman remains a high-point in the history of children's TV. These two separately available DVDs round up 45 episodes of man-child petulance, talking furniture, winks at adult viewers and, in Laurence Fishburne's Cowboy Curtis, the most fabulously dressed Wild West postman ever.

RESIDENT EVIL: APOCALYPSE

COLUMBIA/TRI-STAR HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★

Rounding out what appears to be Crap Horror Sequel Month — are we the only ones who didn't get the memo? — *Apocalypse* has Milla Jovovich doing battle with the usual band of shambling undead and, um, a man in a big stupid rubber outfit. While the above-ground action sequences may substantially out-boom those of its bunker-set predecessor, the end product will disappoint fans of the original movie, the videogame and things that aren't utterly stupid.

WITHOUT A PADDLE

PARAMOUNT HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★

After finding a treasure map, childhood pals Seth Green, Matthew Lillard and Punk'd's Dax Shepard head off to the woods for some *Deliverance*-meets-*Stand By Me* comic adventures. Unfortunately, while the funny bits are very funny, the bonding bits are every bit as excruciating as being enthusiastically sodomized by an inbred country hick (we're guessing).

BLENDER APPROVED

The best DVDs of the last three months



NAPOLEON DYNAMITE

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

The everyday adventures of your average outlandishly dressed, wolverine-battling congenital liar.



WATTSTAX

WARNER HOME VIDEO

Isaac Hayes commemorates one of the most notorious riots ever by... getting his groove on!

MUSIC DVDs



PHISH

IT ELEKTRA/WSM

★★★★

Phish's 2003 two-day It Festival featured lengthy sets, fireworks, a Ferris wheel, art installations and other assorted "amazing creative happenings." Whether the maniac who chose to run the event's long-distance race naked came under the latter heading is never made clear in this memento. But fans jonesing for their now disbanded jam-band heroes should relish both the festival-covering PBS special and the 150 minutes of uncut bonus songs. CLARK COLLIS



YEAH YEAH YEAHS

TELL ME WHICH ROCKERS TO SWALLOW

INTERSCOPE

★★★★

NYC art-punk trio powers through a show at SF's Fillmore that, naturally, features the beer-guzzling antics of bodysuited lead hipster Karen O. Includes a Japanese tour-set that plays like a blooper reel of Karen's injury-causing mishaps. LAUREN HARRIS



GOOD CHARLOTTE

LIVE AT BRITTON ACADEMY

EPIC

★★

In the never-met-a-note-he-didn't-mangle hall of fame, Joel Madden ranks between Johnny Rotten and ODB. But here, his voice is craggy even by his standards, a thin frontpiece to the band's jumbo pop-punk. Their earnestness is winning, though, as a mini-doc proves. JONAH WEINER



VARIOUS ARTISTS THE ROLLING STONES ROCK AND ROLL CIRCUS

ABKCO

★★★★

A Mick Jagger-organized attempt to combine music and big-top performers, 1968's *Circus* is a mixed bag. So much so, a one-off Keith Richards/John Lennon/Eric Clapton/Yoko Ono performance finds Ono climbing into an actual bag. CLARK COLLIS



AIMEE MANN

LIVE AT ST. ANN'S WAREHOUSE

SUPEREGO

★★★★

Mann offers perfect reproductions of her wry catalogue highlights, with the exception of a jam band-ish "Long Shot." Extras include interview footage that finds her railing against "the jackass at the back who yells 'Freebird.'" LAUREN HARRIS



BLUR

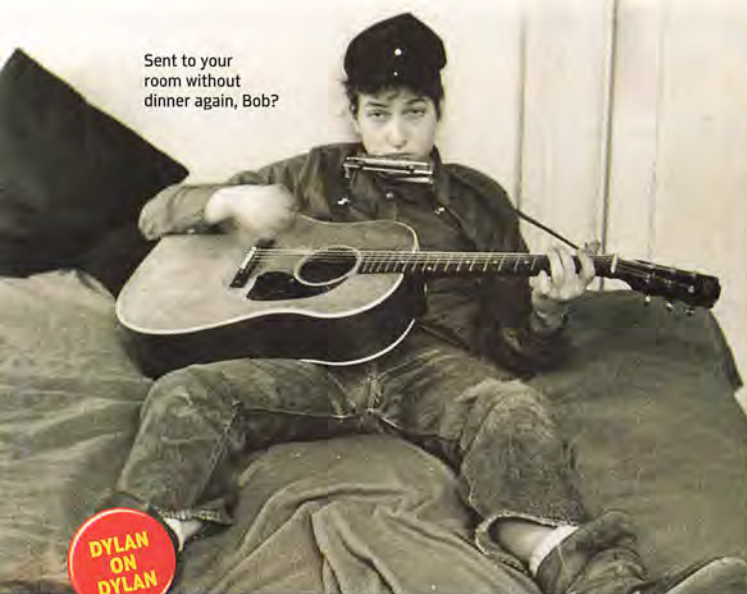
STARSHAPED

VIRGIN

★★

Behind-the-scenes docs are supposed to show rock stars doing rock-star stuff: hoovering drugs, screwing each other's girlfriends, maybe playing the odd song or two. But the U.K. indie-rockers don't do anything crazier than sip hot tea on a bumpy bus. JOSH EELLS

Sent to your room without dinner again, Bob?



THE GUIDE BOOKS

SPONGE BOB

A triumphant self-portrait reveals the makings of our greatest (and weirdest!) songwriter. By Richard Gehr

CHRONICLES: VOLUME ONE

By Bob Dylan

★★★★★ SIMON & SCHUSTER, \$24

BOB DYLAN'S FIRST foray into autobiography turns out to be as allusive — and elusive — as his Shakespearean universe of songs. He deliberately, perversely even, avoids the obvious in this beautifully written, thoroughly American exercise in myth massage. There's nothing about "going electric" at the Newport Folk Festival or recording such epoch-marking albums as *Highway 61 Revisited* or *Blood on the Tracks*, though. Instead, he replaces self-aggrandizement with thoughtful sepia-



toned ruminations on American history, songwriting as theft and the cost of being the involuntary conscience of a generation. "I wasn't a preacher delivering miracles," he says. "It would have driven anybody mad."

Chronicles begins and ends in 1961 with Dylan cutting his first publishing deal. In between, he jump-cuts from the Greenwich Village folk scene to the genesis of 1970's *New Morning* to the uneasy New Orleans recording of his overlooked 1989 album *Oh Mercy*. It may be scattershot, but not a page goes by without a gnomic comment, wry joke or head-spinning revelation ("If I didn't exist, someone would have to have invented me"). What more could you ask of the man? Volume two, please.

METALLICA: THIS MONSTER LIVES

By Joe Berlinger with Greg Milner

★★★★ ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, \$25

The story of the difficult making of *Some Kind of Monster*, a documentary about the difficult making of Metallica's eighth studio album, *This Monster Lives* offers an entertainingly unalloyed account of what filmmaker Joe Berlinger endured to get the job done, such as learning that when drummer Lars Ulrich says "Hey!" he really means "Shut up and go away." Fantastic for die-hard 'Tallica enthusiasts, but the more casual fan might be better off seeing the movie and buying *Master of Puppets* instead. BEN MITCHELL



THE ROSE & THE BRIAR: DEATH, LOVE AND LIBERTY IN THE AMERICAN BALLAD

Edited by Sean Wilentz and Greil Marcus

★★★★ W.W. NORTON & CO., \$27

What does the American ballad say about America? That's the question at the heart of this excellent collection, in which 24 musicians, novelists and pop-culture critics (a couple of whom are on *Blender's* payroll) hold forth on everything from ancient Appalachian folk songs, Dylan and Springsteen. But don't expect apple pie or flag-waving: The USA here is a dark, bloody wilderness where life is cruel, death is whimsical and love never lasts. These ballads won't win on *American Idol*, and more's the pity. JOSH EELLS



WAKING UP WITH A PLACEBO HEADWOUND: IMAGES OF THE FLAMING LIPS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF JAY BLAKESBERG AND J. MICHELLE MARTIN-COYNE

★★★★ WWW.FLAMINGLIPS.COM, \$125

To mess up a book of Flaming Lips pictures you'd have to be blind — and not own a camera. But *Waking Up* really is a magnificent tome with abundant career-spanning shots plus recollections from the three band members. That said, the small print-run and steep price tag make the enterprise seem a bit out of character for a band that prides itself on having such an inclusive everyone-dress-up-like-the-Pink-Panther-and-join-us-onstage vibe. CLARK COLLIS

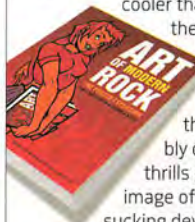


ART OF MODERN ROCK: THE POSTER EXPLOSION

By Paul Grushkin and Dennis King

★★★★ CHRONICLE BOOKS, \$60

As Wayne Coyne observes in his introduction to *Art of Modern Rock*, posters for rock shows are often cooler than the concert they're shilling. After all, how could a Boss Hog show at the Whisky possibly deliver the thrills promised by the image of the Popsicle-sucking devil schoolgirl advertising it? That and hundreds of other posters from the last two decades are reproduced in this gorgeous Gutenberg Bible-sized book, which also includes insightful profiles of the artists who create them. GABE SORIA



BLENDER APPROVED

The best BOOKS of the last three months



ON THE RECORD

By Guy Oseary PENGUIN BOOKS, \$18

Music titans share their tales of showbiz ascension.



TALKING HEADS:

ONCE IN A LIFETIME: THE STORIES BEHIND EVERY SONG

By Ian Gittins HAL LEONARD, \$23

The quintessential art-rock band deconstructed.

THE BEST PART OF A BIG BOOK!

Bono finds Robbie Williams has excellent taste in "art"

"Rob got off his head on mushrooms and Bono found him staring at the wall. Rob had been staring at the same thing for ages, because he was quite sure it was the most beautiful picture he'd ever seen in his life. 'Bono,' he said, 'that picture's amazing . . . 'Robbie,' pointed out Bono, patiently, 'that's the window.'"

Excerpted from *Feel: Robbie Williams*, by Chris Heath. © 2004 Random House, \$34



RINGTOPIA

EXPANDING YOUR MOBILE UNIVERSE

P- 9522 -Usher/Alicia Keys - My B.

P- 9536 -Destiny's Child - Lose My

P- 9541 -Snoop - Drop It Like It's...

P- 9552 -Ludacris - Get Back

P- 9540 -Nelly/Tim McGraw - Over

P- 9561 -Trick Daddy - Let's Go

P- 9539 -N.O.R.E. - Oye Mi Canto

P- 9538 -Lil Wayne - Go D.J.

P- 9537 -Fabulous - Breathe

P- 9548 -Ja Rule - Wonderful

P- 9547 -Ciara - 1, 2 Step

P- 9546 -Chingy - Balla Baby

P- 9551 -Los Lonely Boys - Heaven

P- 9554 -Young Buck - Shorty Wan.

P- 9549 -Lil Scrappy - No Problems

P- 9544 -Akon - Locked Up

P- 9553 -The Game - How We Do

P- 9550 -Lil Jon - What You Gonna.

P- 9543 -Modest Mouse - Ocean B.

P- 9573 -Green Day - American Id.

TOP 20 SONGS

R- 9350 -Bong Hit

P- 9519 -Verve - Bittersweet Symp

P- 9521 -Usher - Yeah

P- 9499 -Mario Bros. Theme

P- 9512 -Outkast - Hey Ya

P- 9498 -Eve - Who's That Girl

P- 9518 -Terror Squad - Lean Bac.

P- 9510 -Marvin Gaye - Sexual He

P- 9517 -Sublime - Santeria

P- 9523 -WAR - Low Rider

P- 9503 -Jay-Z/Beyonce - Bonnie

V- 9529 -Too Short - I'm Rich Bitch

P- 9490 -Alicia Keys - If I Aint Got.

R- 9531 -Female Pleasure

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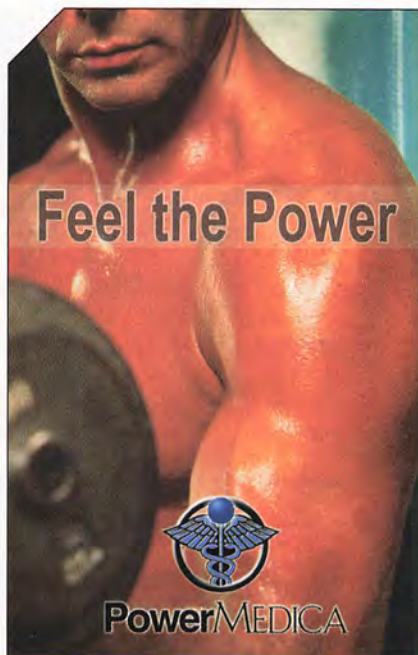
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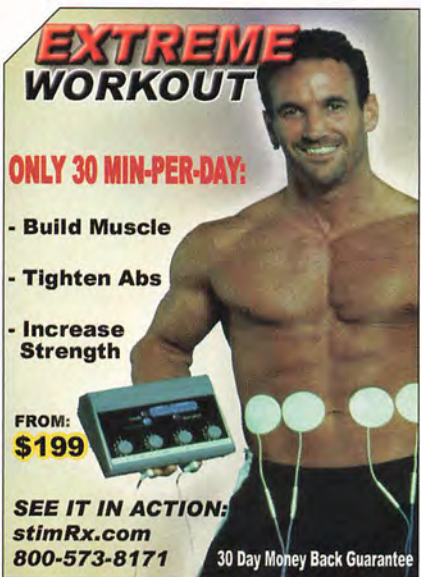
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CHEAP SHOT

David Fincher's 1999 action flick is reborn as a shoddy, slapdash punch-'em-up. By Gabe Soria and Jonah Weiner

FIGHT CLUB

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL — PS2, XBOX

☆☆

RELEASED IN 1999, the movie *Fight Club* was an electrifying rant against consumer culture, a violent tangle of Nietzsche and Buddhism, and a rich exploration of the sound produced when an elbow sends a jawbone into a slab of concrete. Clever, sleekly stylized and hyper-violent, it seemed the perfect candidate for videogame adaptation.

Where the movie managed to pull off a dynamic balancing act, though — it was a brainy punch-'em-up — this tournament-style fighting game junks everything but the flesh-hammering. Which isn't a flaw in and of itself (you can't really fault an action game for lacking

philosophical musings), but the violence here is monotonous, clunky and unsatisfying. Kicks, punches and head-butts land with dull thuds, and special moves are anticlimactic.

It doesn't help that the combatants you choose from are all shlubs. Usually, fighting games feature at least one robot samurai or scantily clad

wolf woman: this one offers up one nondescript shirtless dude after another (Brad Pitt and Ed Norton, the

film's stars, lend neither their likenesses nor voices). And where director David Fincher experimented with impossible camera angles, head-spinning edits and stark lighting, this game's aesthetics look shrugged-off and conventional. Men looking for excuses to touch each other will have to look elsewhere.

THE VIOLENCE IS CLUNKY AND UNSATISFYING.



THE BARD'S TALE

THQ — PS2

If there's one thing *Blender* loves, it's a sleazy musician, and the protagonist here is one of the sleaziest this side of Mötley Crüe. Plying his trade in a Tolkienesque fantasyland, the game's swashbuckling minstrel hero is on a quest for booty of the female persuasion. The *Monty Python* take on swords and sorcery is funny and challenging — lusty bar wenches will send you to slay giant fire-breathing rats. But just because it's absurd doesn't mean it's easy. ☆☆☆



MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES 2

MIDWAY — PS2, XBOX

To today's jaded eyes, the 20 games collected here look about as sophisticated as cave drawings, but their crude '80s and '90s charm can't be denied. They're also compelling evidence that even videogame designers got in on the era's drug binges. How else to explain the Reagan-era fever dream that is *Total Carnage*, in which a Rambo clone is unleashed on the inhuman armies of a Qaddafi-like dictator? ☆☆☆



TAIKO: DRUM MASTER

NAMCO — PS2

Straight out of the arcade scene in *Lost In Translation*, *Taiko: Drum Master* challenges players to bash out the rhythms to an assortment of pop tunes, classical pieces and videogame themes. Quintessentially Japanese, its visual design is a precious mix of punk rock and Hello Kitty. Wannabe Bonhams beware: To get the full experience, you'll have to shell out extra dough for a replica drum controller to whale on. ☆☆☆



NFL STREET 2

EA SPORTS BIG — PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

You'll never see a quarterback scale a fence to throw a touchdown pass in the Super Bowl, but the mastery of such illegal plays is crucial if you want to win in this excellent new installment of EA's take on pigskin. There's also a twist on the create-a-player feature: After you defeat final opponent Xzibit, you can move your customized scrub up to the big time by drafting him onto a pro team in the next Madden game. ☆☆☆

BLENDER APPROVED

The best GAMES of the past few months



ROME: TOTAL WAR

ACTIVISION — PC

In the ancient-history equivalent of a Metallica tour, pillage and burn your way across Eurasia.



X-MEN LEGENDS

ACTIVISION — PS2, XBOX

Marvel's beloved band of misunderstood mutants get the deluxe treatment in this epic game.



WIN A PHOTO IPOD

Does your MP3 player just play music? What are you, Amish? Well, this is your chance to join the 21st century by winning Apple's new 20GB photo iPod, which carries thousands of songs *and* photos. Send us your puzzle and contact info by Jan. 18. We'll pick a winner and post the winner's name at Blender.com/crossword.



PENCIL ME IN

Hey, it's *Blender's* crossword! Starring 8 Down!

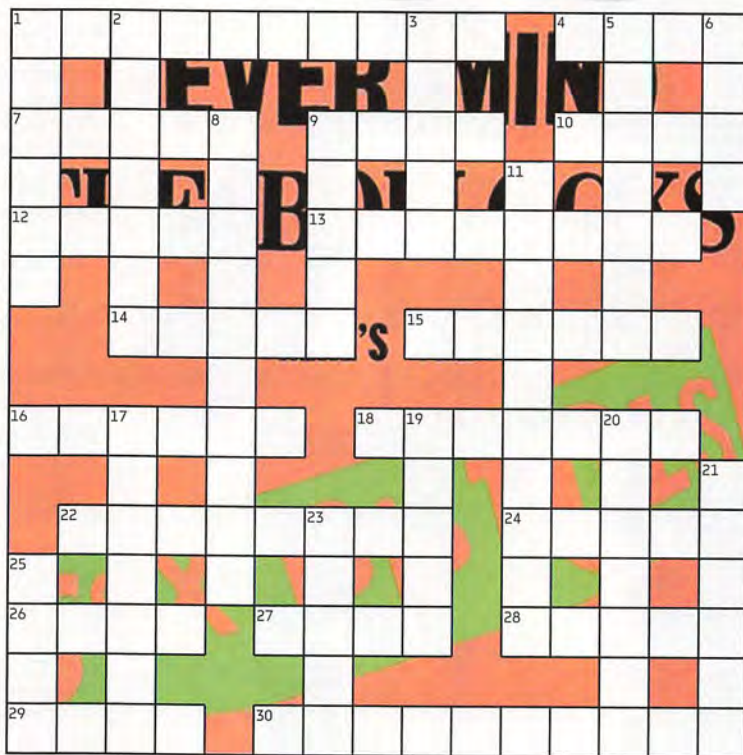
BY BRENDAN QUIGLEY

ACROSS

- 1 Right about now, he's the funk soul brother (two words)
- 4 She wants you to go (get out)
- 7 Setting for 1970 Who live album
- 9 "Come ___ Away" (Styx)
- 10 Lil' guy on the crunk scene
- 12 "Rock On" glam-rocker David
- 13 NYC hipsters with slow hands
- 14 Autocentric 1984 hit by the Cars
- 15 Maker of the Stratocaster
- 16 "You ___ Know," Alanis song
- 18 "Take Five" jazz pianist Dave
- 22 8 Down said never mind these
- 24 Teen idol Carter
- 26 Teen idol Garrett
- 27 Roach who's getting away with murder
- 28 Rapper Talib
- 29 Crosby, Stills & Young's bandmate
- 30 He had Georgia on his mind (two words)

DOWN

- 1 Evanescence's debut album
- 2 *In Love and Death* screamo band (two words)
- 3 Green Day album *American* ____ (2004)
- 5 Singular Yellowcard single
- 6 Tweet's accidental 2002 hit "___ (Oh My)"
- 8 They got in big trouble for "God Save the Queen" (two words)
- 9 Brian Wilson's "lost" album, finally finished 37 years later
- 11 Head Pixie né Charles Thompson (two words)
- 17 2004 number 1 hit from 23 Down and Petey Pablo
- 19 Bob Marley's religion, shortened
- 20 Audioslave frontman
- 21 Latest CD from 13 Across
- 23 Crunk & B's teen queen
- 25 Simple ____ (Canadian pop-punk group)



→ Send your completed puzzle to *Blender* Puzzle Contest, 1040 Avenue of the Americas, 22nd floor, New York, New York 10018

POP HISTORY

SEPTEMBER 2005: THE NETWORKS UNVEIL THEIR POP-STAR-STUDED FALL SEASON

WRITTEN BY CLARK COLLIS, ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN JAY

↓ The 2005 fall TV season featured more pop stars than ever. First NBC weighed in with *Lou Reed's Big Diss*.

↓ Then ABC brought us its mismatched-roommate sitcom *Hitler and Bootsy*.

↓ Finally, Fox's hopes rested on a celebrity version of the Simon Cowell-hosted quiz show *Whose Shit Is This?*



Ben Folds thinks the 73-year-old William Shatner is so freakin' cool he produced his new album. Other people think he's an "asshole." So . . .

BY DAVID KEEPS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS

WHO DOES WILLIAM SHATNER THINK HE IS?



Jay Leno just walked by and said that your self-portrait "looks like someone with bad hair implants, singing into a potato."

What is he talking about? I'm a rock & roll singer on my knees, can't he tell? And that's a microphone.

Yet there seems to be something missing.

Oh, my nose? I have given a primal scream and I've swallowed it.

What did your third grade report card say about you?

My behavior in the classroom was unacceptable. I was a clown, a jokester and an athlete.

What was your nickname?

Toughie. In those days, we didn't know how to spell, so it was probably T-U-F-Y.

What do people who don't like you say about you?

"Asshole" comes immediately to mind.

How would you characterize your taste in sex?

Florid. Your readers can interpret that any way they wish.

Have you ever had a Bob Crane home video moment?

Well, I've gotten tangled up in electrical wires, but only around my feet.

If you could change one thing about your body, what would it be?

I don't like the six-pack abs I have. It is so in-your-face. Especially if you're kneeling.

What is your least favorite kind of music?

Before lunch, I would've said punk. Now I'm beginning to look at punk like I must have looked at rock & roll. When rock & roll first came on the scene, I shunned it. I was frozen in the musical taste of the time, which was ballads and swing. You've got to jar yourself out of the lines in the coloring book. I'm afraid to have a least favorite music in case I'm missing something.

What song makes you cry like a bitch?

Something like "Memory," from the original cast recording of *Cats*, would do it.

When it's cocktail time, what's Bill having?

Bill will have some bubbly apple stuff, a sparkling cider. I once had a \$25,000 bottle of wine and it was the greatest I ever tasted.

How many glasses of \$25,000 wine does it take to get you to sing "Mr. Tambourine Man"?

If you say "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," I'll do it for cider.

So, William Shatner, who do you think you are?

I think I'm a man trying to keep my head above water. I'm treading as hard as I can.

"I DON'T LIKE MY SIX-PACK ABS."

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